

High skilled labour at cheap cost could be Jordan's best strategy

Survey finds innovative skills among managers, need for reexamination of export strategy and studies on Palestinian and Israeli industries

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — As the Middle East slowly gears up to take advantage of the dividends of peace, and improvement in the technical skills of the Jordanian work force could be the most significant factor that could help the Kingdom's industrial community, a recent survey has found.

The survey found that industrial managers appeared to be giving more attention to improving the technical capability of their work force rather than change dramatically the marketing strategies of business or production techniques.

"A highly skilled manpower at competitive cost could be the key strategy to the future of industrial development in Jordan," said an executive summary of the survey made available to the Jordan Times. "It is one of the few assets that Jordan can develop in order to improve its comparative advantage in the region."

But the country also needs a "fundamental" reexamination of its whole export strategy if it were to realise its goal of an export-led economic growth, it said.

The study was conducted by the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCOM), a U.N. agency, in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Outreach Consultation Project of the University of Jordan.

The survey, carried out in late 1994 among 84 small, medium- and large-scale industrial enterprises in Jordan, sought to assess "the strategies that firms may follow in order to face the challenge of the peace process." It said there was a pressing need for detailed studies on both Palestinian and Israeli industries to help Jordanian businessmen to ascertain the negative/positive impact of trade with the Palestinian territories and Israel.

The findings of the survey, expected to be released in full soon, come at a time when Jordan businesses are increasingly in the limelight against the backdrop of the economic opportunities that the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty offers and questions are being asked on whether the Kingdom's industrial community is capable of rising to the challenges in terms of products, equipment, technology and marketing after decades of traditional approaches and large dependence on the state for support.

Market analysts say some Jordanian businesses have come up on the industrialists' own initiatives and they turned to the government for backing only when issues of legislation and official contacts were inevitable to advance their business prospects. At the same time, the peculiarities of the regional markets imposed on Jordanian industries also made it all the more difficult for many of them to implement

well-orchestrated production and marketing techniques because of the changes in the constants that were expected when programmes were first drawn up, according to analysts.

On the other hand, the 1990-91 Gulf crisis sparked by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait might also have brought out the best in innovative skills of the Jordanian industrial community, says the executive summary of the survey.

"It is well established that the environment within which Jordanian managers had to operate in the last four to five years was a very complicated and volatile," said the summary of the survey. That was a reference to the sweeping repercussions that the Gulf crisis had had on the economy of the Kingdom, which lost key markets in Iraq and found itself deprived of the traditional buyers of Jordanian products in the Gulf states.

The survey classified issues on the basis of interconnected but distinct factors that play a key role in determining the course of Jordanian industry. These included improvement in technical capability, changes in input, market orientation, the national economic restructuring programme, impact of the Gulf crisis, and the challenges posed by the peace process.

On the first count — improvement in technical capability of the Jordanian work force — the survey found that "the most significant changes were not in the hardware aspects of technology but in the software aspect i.e. the human labour force."

It said 86 per cent of the managers interviewed reported a "significant change" in the level of innovation and renewal within their enterprises, 74 per cent experienced significant change in the technical capability of their work force and 92 per cent reported that this change in technical capability was towards improvement.

It is subject to debate whether the change was the result of a concerted approach towards shifting the focus of training Jordanian workers with a view to raising the technical abilities of the local force or the injection of quality brought in by expatriates returning from Kuwait or the natural outcome of a major crisis bringing out fresh approaches from people.

The survey said only five per cent of the target audience belonged to the expatriate community which has returned home. As such the explanation could lie in the two other factors.

On the second set of factors — changes in inputs — the study found little "significant changes... in the production." It acknowledged that the main factor in this context was the difficulties that Jordanian industries faced in their imports as a result of the naval blockade of Aqaba — as part of international enforcement of the sanctions

against Iraq. The blockade was lifted in late August 1994 after four years leaving a crippling effect on Jordanian industries in terms of high prices and delayed deliveries that scrambled production schedules. As a result Jordanian products lost their competitive edge in prices.

As the Jordanian dinar was devalued in 1989, depressing the purchasing value of the currency, the Kingdom's industrialists were forced to switch from their traditional but expensive sources to cheaper raw materials from Eastern and Central Europe, Turkey, the Far East and Arab countries.

"However, cheaper should not be interpreted automatically as lower quality," said the study. "Jordanian managers were fully aware that competitive products required upgrading of the quality of their raw and intermediate materials."

The study found the changing composition of markets for Jordanian producers as "both remarkable and disturbing" as the orientation for output remained at 75 per cent for the local market and 25 per cent for exports.

"The fact that Jordan has been openly seeking an export-led economic development strategy without remarkable success means that its whole export strategy has to be reexamined in a fundamental way," said the study. "In fact, some critics insist that Jordan, in spite of general claims, does not have a clear and articulated strategy for export."

A disturbing trend is a policy of emulating "successful industries," leading to unhealthy competition among a large number of producers of identical products — particularly foodstuffs, plastics, chemicals and textiles — in a small market.

The important question is: How can Jordanian investors be told that some industrial branches are already saturated and who can advise them to search for new and more innovative lines of products? said the study. It also found that another question that remained unanswered was whether Jordanian industries could interact and complement each other rather than compete with each other.

In the area of the impact of the economic restructuring programme under way in the country on the status of industries, the study found that there was a general consensus among industrial managers that the policies and measures adopted by the government had brought about broad stability.

Over two-thirds of the target audience asserted that the only significant change has been the amount of taxes they had to pay, and 95 of them said the taxation policies affected them negatively. The strict economic reform programme helped maintain a monetary stability that was "essential for the ability of Jordanian enterprises to survive during the Gulf crisis and its aftermath," said the

results of the survey, noting that the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) managed to hold the dinar under stable bounds and inflation was also held under manageable levels.

Furthermore, the drive to curb imports helped industries have a high level of protection against imported competing products, it said.

Regional crises always had impact on the Jordanian industrial sector, but with contrasting results. During the Iraq/Iraq war of 1980-88, some of the local industries prospered as Jordan became the focal point of transit trade with Iraq in addition to the Kingdom's exporters finding new markets in Iraq. On the other hand, the Gulf crisis led to devastating impact on many Jordanian industries whose output was attended to the Iraqi market.

"It may be noted that while rapid change increases the risk borne by... it may generate many opportunities for those who are ready and aggressive," said the survey.

Marketing was most affected by the Gulf crisis with all its repercussions, including the blockade of Aqaba which forced changes in approaches of many companies, and some of them that could not adapt to the new situation were forced "either to close down or to operate at very low production capacity."

"The strategies followed by some Jordanian managers were a local consequence of the main challenges they were facing," according to the survey. "They responded to the problems in marketing and sales by a three-pronged marketing strategy: more concentration on the local market, diversification into new products and seeking alternative export markets."

In the context of the shifts brought about by the peace process, the survey found that the responses provided by Jordanian managers were ambivalent and tentative while remaining optimistic despite "apprehension" over the "ups and downs of official Jordanian relations and the possible impact of these, sometimes unstable and antagonistic, relations on the possibilities of benefiting from business relations with Israel."

"They would like to expand their sales to cover the West Bank and Gaza... they would like to enter joint ventures with Palestinian businessmen," it said.

The survey also found that there was a general fear from Israeli competition although no specific studies were available to Jordanian businessmen. "In fact Jordanian businessmen are discovering how little they know about the Israeli economy and its various sectors," it said. "There is a felt need to study in detail and to be more familiar with various sectors on both Palestinian and Israeli industries."

"Such a knowledge is a prerequisite for formulating strategies that are necessary for the challenges of the coming peace era," it concluded.

Peres met Syrian defence chief's daughter — report

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli newspaper said on Friday Foreign Minister Shimon Peres secretly met the daughter of Syria's defence minister in Paris this week to push deadlocked talks with Damascus.

It was the latest in a series of Israeli media accounts of secret meetings aimed at jump-starting stalled talks between the sides. The foreign ministry declined to comment on the report, and Syria has denied holding secret talks with Israel.

The mass circulation daily Yedioth Ahronoth said Mr. Peres met Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlas' daughter in talks meant to prepare a meeting between Mr. Peres and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa.

It said a "senior Syrian representative" may have also participated in the meeting, which it said was initiated by a mediator who told Mr. Peres that Syrian President Hafez Al Assad wanted to convey a change in his position.

Asked on Thursday about media reports of a meeting,

Mr. Peres said: "I don't know about this. If I had something to announce, I would announce it."

Syrian Information Minister Mohammad Salama described the reports as "fabricated and imaginative" and accused Israeli officials and media of being behind them. The negotiations are stuck over the future of the Golan Heights, which Israel seized from Syria in 1967.

Israeli radio reported Mr. Peres saw Nahed Tlass, widow of Syrian millionaire Akram Ojfeh, during the evening after talks with President Francois Mitterrand. Yedioth Ahronoth added that the rendezvous took place at the Ritz Hotel.

Mr. Peres flew from France to Latin America on Wednesday where he declared: "We can reach an agreement by the middle of 1995" with Syria.

Arab sources in Paris told AFP that Mr. Peres had met a Syrian personality.

Mr. Sharaa on Thursday ruled out any resumption of bilateral peace talks with Israel in the near future.

Algerian parties sign breakthrough accord

ROME (Agencies) — The main Algerian Islamic fundamentalist group signed an unprecedented accord with most of the country's opposition parties on Friday urging the military-backed government to hold democracy talks.

In a statement described as a "national contract," the religious and secular Algerian opposition called for a national conference to be held as soon as possible to pave the way for free democratic elections.

The breakthrough accord between the one-time enemy groups was signed at the Rome headquarters of a Roman Catholic community — the Sant'Egidio — which has sponsored the six days of talks.

The authorities in Algiers have branded the mediation as "outside interference" and declined to attend.

The four-page document, a copy of which was sent to news agencies, was issued after the parties met for six days of talks here to draw up a common response to three years of conflict since the

army scrapped elections the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win.

The document called for negotiations with the army-backed government on a broad-based transitional administration that would lead to democratic multi-party elections.

But it said FIS leaders and all other political prisoners had to be released from detention and the army kept out of politics before serious negotiations could start.

The document, warning of a "real risk of civil war," said Algerians were living in a climate of unparalleled terror. "A global, political and equitable solution is urgently needed to open other prospects for a population that aspires to peace, stability and popular legitimacy."

A French diplomat said the government's opposition to the talks and the non-participation of the most hardline fundamentalist formation, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), called into question the impact of the agreement on the ground.

Saudis, EU more amenable to Mideast bank

— The Jerusalem Post
ISRAELI officials expressed satisfaction yesterday (Wednesday) over the broad international support shown here for a new Middle East development bank.

At the conclusion of a two-day forum to discuss establishing such a bank, they also said they were pleased by the more amenable attitudes of the European Union and Saudi Arabia.

Asked whether the Gulf states will be forthcoming in helping to fund the bank, the finance ministry director-general David Brodet, said: "I feel very good because what is the spirit of the meeting... is that eventually we shall find in this bank the Gulf states, the core countries in the Middle East and also the North African coun-

tries. "The Saudis are basically more positive," he added, saying they came around due to the delegates' agreement that the bank would not extend "soft," subsidized loans, but rather only loans at market rates.

He said the EU, which had been skeptical about the bank due to fears of American control, reversed course after being presented with a united Israeli-Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian front.

U.S. under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Joan Spero, agreed, saying the "bank was seen as a particularly strong option" because the four parties offered "unified and visionary presentation."

But she said the door had not been closed on other financial mechanisms.

The 37 countries and international lending institutions meeting here also decided yesterday to form a task force that will explore such matters as the composition of the bank, its equity and charter.

The U.S. released a statement summarising the session in which it called for all countries hoping to become members of the bank to first "eschew direct and indirect boycotts."

The foreign ministry director-general, Uri Savir, called the sessions "the most important meetings" on progressing toward formation of the bank.

Saudi Arabia's agreement to consider joining the task force, despite not having endorsed to the notion of the bank in the first place, provided Israel's greatest surprise this week," he said.

"I think they realised that if you can't beat it, join it," he said.

The task force is due to meet here for the first time in March and is expected to deliver its recommendations by next October 30 in Amman, when the establishment of the bank is to be officially announced.

Any project to be funded by the development bank must be regional in nature rather than based in only one country, the Israeli officials said.

Brodet predicted that if the Amman conference adopts the task force's ultimate recommendations, the bank could begin operations as soon as early 1996. The funding sources are still unclear, though Brodet said 60 per cent is likely to come from outside the region.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rabin's Labour Party recovers in polls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party staged a recovery in an opinion poll published Friday, pushing the right-wing Likud back into second place. Labour would garner 40 of the 120 seats in parliament, or 30 per cent of the vote, if a general election were held now, the survey for the Maariv newspaper found. The Likud would take 33 or 34 seats, or 26 per cent. Some seven per cent voiced no opinion. Last week, polls gave Labour only 36 seats compared with 42 for the Likud. However, the latest survey would not guarantee that Labour would remain in power because its main coalition ally, the left-wing Meretz, was credited with only four or five seats compared with the 12 it holds today. Labour won 44 seats in the 1992 elections and Likud 32. The poll was carried out this week among a representative sample of 500 Israelis.

King Fahd phones five Arab leaders

RIYADH (AFP) — King Fahd phoned five fellow Arab leaders to discuss developments in the Arab World and Gulf, the official Saudi news agency reported Friday. The king spoke late Thursday to Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah of Kuwait, and UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, as well as presidents Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Hafez Al Assad of Syria. The king attended a summit with Mr. Assad and Mr. Mubarak in Egypt last month which called for a slowing in the normalisation of Arab relations with Israel pending a final Middle East settlement.

Israel to ask Britain to remove students from blacklist

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel will demand that it be removed from a blacklist of countries whose students should not be allowed on post-graduate courses with potential for nuclear proliferation, the foreign ministry said Friday. Ambassador Moshe Raviv has been told to convey Israel's concern to the Foreign Office in London and demand it be struck off the list immediately, a spokesman said. Britain announced last July that universities had been asked to join a voluntary scheme under which applicants for certain sensitive courses

would be vetted by the government. Countries on the list include Cuba, India, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan and Syria. However, a British embassy spokeswoman told AFP: "There is no embargo whatsoever on Israeli students." "The scheme is voluntary and the government cannot prevent anyone from studying at the universities. There have been no cases involving Israeli students. 'There have not been any applicants to study areas of concern, which are mostly nuclear-related courses.'" She said that the scheme was "not linked directly to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which is up for renewal next year. But the spokeswoman added: "If Israel signed the NPT it would not doubt affect the position."

Egypt's office in Gaza to open at weekend

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's representative office in Gaza will open at the weekend with diplomat Mahmoud Korayem in charge, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said on Friday. Egypt's will be the fifth such office to open in Gaza, where the autonomous Palestinian Authority led by Yasser Arafat has its headquarters. The Egyptian office will also have a branch in the West Bank town of Jericho, the other area under the Palestinian Authority. The ministry said the purpose in opening the office was to support the authority and follow up Egyptian-Palestinian agreements on trade, economic relations and cultural and scientific exchanges. At the insistence of Israel, which opposes the trappings of statehood in Palestinian-administered areas, the self-rule agreement barred full diplomatic offices in Gaza and Jericho.

Czech premier to visit Egypt next week

CAIRO (R) — Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus will visit Egypt for three days from next Thursday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Ataf Sedki, a Foreign Ministry official said on Friday. His talks with Mr. Mubarak, who visited the Czech Republic last July, will include Bosnia and the Middle East, while Mr. Klaus and Dr. Sedki will compare notes on economic reform, he added. Egypt and the Czech Republic have prepared draft agreements on preventing double taxation and abolishing visa requirements for Czech and Egyptian visitors, he said.

Save water... Every drops counts!

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:00 Cocotte Minimes
17:30 Que Le Miffleur Gagne
18:30 L'Histoire Du Cirque
18:30 Les Intropides
19:00 News in French
19:15 Fa Ut Pas Reverser
19:30 Harry and Henderson
20:00 Innovations
20:30 Quantum Leap
21:10 Murder She Wrote
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "Country"
23:59 Feature film: "Country"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fajr
06:32 (Sunrise) Duha
11:43 Dhur
14:32 'Asr
16:56 Maghrib
18:17 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swetlana, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661257
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 623543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 711331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 712361
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 711751
Assam International Church Tel. 625256
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824338
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684192
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with winds southerly light to moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 1 / 15
Aqaba 7 / 21

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Descr. 0 / 16
Jordan Valley 6 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 21 Humidity
readings: Amman 56 per cent,
Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bahjat Bader 840362
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 622597
Dr. Sa'ad Al 782362
Dr. Yahya Abdul Salam 736072
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Naroukh pharmacy 626672
Al Salam pharmacy 636739
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 627660
Najib pharmacy 847632
ERBID:
Dr. Mohammad Al Hilu 279773
Aljouda pharmacy (-) 1
ZARQA:
Dr. Ziyad J'alum (-) 1
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Fire Brigade 637777
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Blood Bank 751212
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 630800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 637111
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Naseem Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Ann 642816
Akhil Maternity, J. Ann 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 644714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 84545
Al-Mushtak Hospital 667227/8
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/77
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Irbid, Al-Mustajir 7771013
Al-Bashir, J. Adrafish 7811126
Army, Maraka 391611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)863323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/867332
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)900560
Al-Husna Modern Hospital (09)96990

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:45 Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
09:15 Athens (RJ)
09:40 New Delhi (RJ)
09:45 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Cairo (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:50 Cairo (RJ)
17:55 London, Berlin (RJ)
17:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
03:15 London, Aqaba (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
06:20 Vienna (OS)
15:45 Rome, Larnaca (AZ)
18:15 Dubai (EK)
19:00 Sanaa (Y)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:25 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
11:35 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
11:45 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
11:45 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 London (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
13:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
14:45 Larnaca (RJ)
15:45 Beirut (RJ)
16:50 Jeddah (RJ)
17:55 Damascus (RJ)
21:25 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
04:10 London (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)
07:45 Beirut (ME)
13:50 Vienna (OS)
15:15 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Sanaa (Y)
22:00 Larnaca (CY)
23:00 Cairo (MS)
23:59 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:20 Amsterdam (KL)
02:25 London (BA)

ELIJAH RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:30 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Apples (lower price in file per kg.)

Uppercase 700 / 400
Banana 680
Banana (Mukammal) 620
Cabbage 200 / 120
Carrot 260 / 170
Cauliflower 180 / 120
Cucumbers (large) 180 / 120
Cucumbers (small) 380 / 220
Eggplant 300 / 200
Garlic 450 / 250
Grape Fruit 220 / 160
Lemon 250 / 150
Marrow (large) 120 / 80
Marrow (small) 300 / 180
Onion (green) 280 / 160
Onion (dry) 350 / 280
Orange 600 / 400
Pepper (hot) 540 / 300
Pepper (sweet) 620 / 360
Potato 330 / 200
Potato 180 / 100
Spinach 220 / 160
String Beans 900 / 500
Tomato 380 / 200

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government on a
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It said FIS leaders and
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be released from de-
tention and the army
politics before serious
negotiations could start.
document, warning of
risk of civil war, said
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of unparalleled to-
A global, political and
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or legitimacy.
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KEY PRICES

KEY PRICES



Accompanied by Minister of Administrative Development Mobeiddin Toq, Yemeni Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reform Sadeq Abu Ras Friday talks to the press upon his arrival in Amman (Petra photo)

Yemeni minister arrives for talks on administrative development

AMMAN (Petra) — Yemeni Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Development Sadeq Abu Ras Friday arrived in Amman on a six-day visit during which he will hold talks with Minister of Administrative Development Mobeiddin Toq and other officials on enhancing Jordanian-Yemeni relations in administrative fields.

In an arrival statement, Mr. Abu Ras landed Jordanian-Yemeni ties and

stressed his government's determination to promote them in various fields of cooperation.

He said he will work during his visit on laying the foundations for signing a bilateral cooperation agreement in administrative fields.

He told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that Jordan and Yemen were currently considering a date for the meeting of the bigger Jordanian-Yemeni joint committee.

On Yemeni-Saudi relations, which have soured recently over a border dispute, Mr. Abu Ras said there was an ad hoc Yemeni committee currently preparing a visit by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi officials after he concludes a European tour within the coming two weeks.

Mr. Abu Ras was received at the airport by Mr. Toq and other officials.

Jordan, Cuba consider setting up sugar refinery joint venture

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and Cuba have launched discussions into the possibility of setting up a sugar refinery in the Kingdom as a joint venture in which the Cuban equity could come in the form of raw sugar from the Caribbean country.

The discussions follow a visit to Jordan last month by the Cuban Foreign Minister, Roberto Gonzales, who announced at a press conference at the end of his talks here that Amman and Havana were interested in expanding trade relations and economic cooperation in various fields.

Mr. Gonzales mentioned sugar as an item that his country could barter for Jordanian phosphates and other fertilizer related products and said the two countries could also cooperate in industrial joint ventures and pharmaceuticals.

Ali Dajani, an adviser at the Amman Chamber of Industry, said the concept of building a sugar refinery in Jordan was discussed at a meeting between the chamber top officials headed by President Kbaloudun Abu Hassan and the Non-resident Cuban ambassador to Jordan, Ernesto Gomez Abesal.

Mr. Abesal, whose official title is ambassador extraordinary and plenipo-

mentary, is based in Damascus.

"The discussions focused on the possibility of setting up a refinery in Jordan as a joint venture, and the Cuban equity in the project could come in the form of raw sugar," said Mr. Dajani.

"We are in the very early stages of the discussions, and it would take feasibility studies and detailed discussions before we could arrive at any figures related to capital, equity sharing, production capacity of the plant, etc."

Experts familiar with the sugar industry said the plant could cost at least \$80 million, depending on the choice of machinery and technology as well as installed capacity and projected output.

Cuba one of the largest producers of sugar, and Cuban technology, described as medium to high level, is rated as highly cost-effective in the area of refining sugar.

Depending on the capacity of the plant, Jordan could also export part of its output to neighbouring countries, Mr. Dajani said, adding that the Cuban side displayed keen interest in the project.

The plant could also provide much-needed job opportunities.

Jordan consumes between 140,000 and 150,000 tonnes of sugar every year, accounting for about \$50

million of its imports.

The cost of imports is expected to go up dramatically this year, given that international prices of sugar have hit five-year highs.

Latest quotes from the London commodity market are at between \$420 and \$440 per tonne, up from \$340 early last year. The prices went up because of severe damage to sugar cane crops in several key producing countries.

Jordanian-Cuban discussions on the proposed joint venture would resume when a delegation from the Kingdom will visit Havana in the first half of 1995. Also expected to be discussed during the visit are prospects for sugar-for-phosphates barter trade and joint projects in pharmaceuticals and health-related areas.

Mr. Dajani recalled that Jordan built its first cement plant in the 50s under an arrangement largely similar in concept with the proposal for the sugar refinery.

Germans, who provided the technology and machinery, and the Jordanian government held 51 per cent of the equity of the cement plant when it was launched.

The Germans have since sold their share in the company, and the Jordanian government owns controlling interest in the production facility situated at Fuhais.

Road safety group hopes to achieve progress with ministerial panel — Mohammed Dabbas

By Jennifer Hamarneh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Car Accidents (JSPCA) is pleased that the government is looking into the mounting road accident problem and hopes that the Central Traffic Committee's meetings this week will consider a related draft law proposed by the society, said JSPCA President Mohammed Dabbas Friday.

Mr. Dabbas, who attended an emergency meeting of the Central Traffic Committee Thursday chaired by Minister of Interior Salameh Hammad, said that his organisation has, for the last four years, been seeking the formal creation of a governing body to take on the responsibilities of all departments concerned with traffic and road-related matters.

According to Mr. Dabbas, the various government bodies responsible for road safety continue to exercise no coordination. He said the JSPCA had long ago proposed a draft law that calls for the creation of a "super body" which would centralise activities of the concerned authorities and issue ordinances and regulations and ensure that road safety needs of the country are being met.

At Thursday's meeting Mr. Hammad spoke of the need to enact new legislation that would help reduce accidents on the roads, including a point system for frequent violators of traffic laws and regulations.

According to Mr. Dabbas, the legislation Mr. Hammad was speaking of was not actually a new law but rather amendments to

the existing traffic law. Those amendments, Dr. Dabbas explained, are aimed at "closing gaps in the present law and tightening it up."

He said the proposed amendments are separate and apart from his society's draft law. On Wednesday, His Majesty King Hussein visited police headquarters and called on the government and the Public Security Department (PSD) to take urgent action to end the chaos on the country's roads.

Mr. Dabbas hopes that at another meeting of the Central Traffic Committee scheduled for Wednesday, to which he has also been invited, he will be able to present the JSPCA's proposed law. He was open to suggestions and modifications of the draft document, and said he hoped the committee would send

it swiftly for approval of the Cabinet and then to Parliament for consideration.

At Thursday's emergency meeting, Mr. Hammad said the draft law (amendments) stipulates that repeat violators of traffic laws would have their licences confiscated and traffic police would be given wider authorities to deal with any breach of the law. The minister also said that he would be urging the Ministry of Public Works to step up work on removing dangerous road junctions and improving the safety of roads generally.

Mr. Hammad said that last year drivers in the Amman area alone committed 20,000 traffic law violations. He said motorists are to blame for the majority of road accidents.

The Central Traffic Committee will prepare short, medium and long

term plans to stem traffic violations, said Mr. Hammad.

He said a public awareness programme on traffic safety will also be given full attention.

According to PSD statistics there were 24,799 road accidents in Jordan during 1993, but no figures were yet available on accidents of 1994.



Mohammad Dabbas

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Premier instructs government to implement budget

AMMAN (Petra) — In an official communique Friday, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker instructed government departments to implement the 1995 fiscal budget in accordance with regulations, particularly those on expenditure, and in coordination with the Finance Ministry.

According to the instructions:

1. All departments must strictly abide by rules concerning the dispensing of funds, money transfers, and spending only on approved budget projects.
2. Departments should not

exceed budget allocations.

3. All departments should take measures to reduce expenses and ensure the collection of funds due to the state treasury.

4. Departments should coordinate with the General Budget Department in preparing capital and current expenditure programmes, and that the Audit Bureau should be fully informed of any plans in this regard.

5. Departments should ensure that the earmarked allocations for water, electricity and fuel expenses must not be exceeded.

6. Departments should not take unilateral steps to trans-

fer funds from one project to another.

7. Department tender committees should ensure that no tenders are awarded before sufficient allocations have been made in advance.

8. Departments should implement projects as early as possible during the fiscal year to avoid requiring any reallocation of funds in the next year.

9. Departments with allocations for maintenance and construction should coordinate with the Ministry of Public Works, which must take charge of their implementation.

10. Departments should obtain monthly reports from the public works ministry on any funds spent on their projects.

11. Departments are not permitted to appoint new employees or purchase vehicles and equipment from allocations earmarked for other projects except by prior approval from the Ministry of Finance.

12. Departments in various governorates should coordinate with the finance ministry while adhering to rules concerning decentralisation.

13. Departments should conduct monthly assessments of their financial status,

14. All departments should supply the finance ministry with lists of all employees and their salaries and the dates of their appointments by the end of February.

15. Departments which collect revenues must provide the General Budget Department with full revenue statements.

16. Departments must keep the finance ministry informed of any planned cooperation with regional or international organisations.

17. Departments should provide the budget department with a list of all government-owned vehicles.

'Peace treaty is a model for resolving region's problems'

PARIS (Petra) — French President Francois Mitterrand was reported as saying that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty constituted a model for resolving all other issues in the region.

A source at the Elysee Palace in Paris said that the French president made the remark during his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, stressing France's full support for Arab-Israeli negotiations especially Jordanian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli talks and agreements.

According to the source, France, which currently holds the European Union's (EU) rotating presidency, will exert all possible efforts within the European Union to ensure wider cooperation between the EU on the one hand and Jordan and Israel on the other, in a bid to back the peace treaty.

The source also quoted the French president as stressing Paris's traditional position of supporting the right of the Palestinian people in determining their own future, stressing the need for quick withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab lands and ensuring free, fair and democratic elections in the Arab territories.

The source added that Paris was seeking to narrow the differences between Syria and Lebanon on the one hand and Israel on the other for the sake of helping them to arrive at a comprehensive peace.

5,000 trees to be planted along Dead Sea road

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Governorate will celebrate Arbor Day on Sunday by planting 5,000 forest tree saplings in the Forest of Peace area on Naour Al Adassiya near the Dead Sea road.

The saplings will be planted on the sides of the road to add to the scenery there and to prevent landslides.

Area residents in addition to representatives of public and private institutions will take part in the tree-planting ceremony, Amman Governor Talaat Al Nawaiseh is expected to take part as well.

Similar celebrations organised by the governorate will be held in other areas of Amman.

Director of Amman Agriculture Department Mohammad Lawzi said the department was currently giving priority to cultivating forest tree saplings and developing the highlands.

Mr. Lawzi emphasised that planting trees should not be exclusive to Arbor Day celebrations.

He said in an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the department nurseries in Yajouz area produced 1.5 million tree saplings in 1994. These

saplings, he said, were distributed free of charge to the Ministry of Agriculture Afforestation Projects as well as to citizens to encourage them to participate in the "Green Jordan" project in the areas of Naour, Wadi Sir and Yajouz where 1,500 dunums of land will be planted with trees this year.

Mr. Lawzi said that already 22,000 saplings were planted in these areas and some 105,000 forest tree saplings were given to citizens for planting around their private groves to protect fruit trees from winds.

He said the department offers farmers cash and in-kind assistance.

According to Mr. Lawzi, the department this year started a new project to improve the incomes of needy families in the countryside by offering loans in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Credit Corporation.

The project aims to increase the number of goats and sheep owned by needy families, raise field crop production in areas receiving heavy rain, improve nutritional levels in rural areas and increase red meat production.



Qatari Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary to the press at Queen Alia International Airport before his departure for Doha (Petra photo)

Qatari official concludes visit Ministry describes outcome as 'very positive'

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Ministry Secretary General Nayef Hadid and Qatari Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Ahmad Ben Abdullah Al Mahmoud Friday described the outcome of the Jordanian-Qatari Committee's meeting which concluded in Amman last week as very positive.

The two officials, speaking to reporters at the Queen Alia International Airport (QAIA) prior to the departure of the Qatari official after a several-day visit to Jordan, said the meetings underlined the two countries' intentions to promote bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Mahmoud said the meetings achieved the desired results, pointing out that the two sides reviewed bilateral agreements and means of activating them and

signing new ones.

Stressing that Qatar was seeking better cooperation with Jordan, Mr. Mahmoud said the two sides discussed the prospect of launching new bilateral projects.

The Jordanian side, he said, proposed several ideas to enhance cooperation.

"I will convey these ideas to my government to study them," he said.

Mr. Hadid said the Jordanian side discussed conducting maintenance on Qatari aircraft in Jordan, an issue for further study, he added.

According to Mr. Hadid, Jordan has also requested that Qatar facilitate Jordanians wishing to obtain visas to visit Qatar and called for activating the role of the private sector in the two countries, noting that the issue is

scheduled to be discussed by the higher joint Jordanian-Qatari Committee due to meet in Doha in April.

Last Tuesday, it was reported that the Qatari official has proposed the creation of a Jordanian-Qatari Bank in Doha.

Following a meeting with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Mr. Hadid said the Qatari proposal entails 75 per cent Qatari ownership and 25 per cent Jordanian capital.

Mr. Hadid also announced that the Qatari official suggested the creation of a joint private university in Qatar which would employ mainly Jordanian expertise and staff.

According to Mr. Hadid, the Qatari proposals were met with positive response from the Jordanian side.

U.S. grants UNRWA \$1.4m for 2 new schools in Hittin

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Thursday had a ground breaking ceremony for two new UNRWA schools in Marka (Hittin) camp.

Attending the ceremony Wesley Egan, the U.S. ambassador to Jordan, said the schools will be constructed and equipped through a \$1,433,000 contribution from the U.S. government.

The new school buildings will replace unsuitable prefabricated school premises and will include 38 classrooms, four administrative rooms, four teachers rooms, two multipurpose rooms, one library room, one computer centre, one laboratory and other facilities, according to UNRWA.

The premises will be used by four schools operating on a double shift basis: two for girls, and two co-educational, and will serve about 3,800 pupils, an UNRWA statement said.

Ambassador Egan was welcomed at the ceremony by Ele Saaf, director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan.

Present at the ceremony were Musleh Al Tarawneh, Governor of Zarqa, Nazeer Bouchoushi, director of education at UNRWA, and senior government and UNRWA officials and a large crowd of camp notables, residents and pupils.

UNRWA in Jordan provides 10 years schooling to more than 150,000 Palestine refugee children in 202 schools with 4,420 teaching staff.

The U.S. is the major contributor to UNRWA's budget with over \$78 million for 1994, said the statement.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

SOUTH AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL

★ Film entitled "Sarafina" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

★ Poetry recital by Syrian Poet Shawqi Baghdadhi at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:30 p.m.

★ Exhibition entitled "Phase II: Doors and Windows" by Jordanian artist Ghada Dahdaleh. Also showing an exhibition by contemporary Arab artists at Darat Al Funun.

★ Exhibition of works by Hala Mahayni at the Petra International Hotel in Aqaba.

★ Exhibition of abstract art by Zakaria Barakat at the Housing Bank Gallery.

★ Exhibition of works by Saad Khalil at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of paintings by Ismail and Tamam Shamout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation.

Truce monitors take up posts ahead of fresh Sri Lanka talks

COLOMBO (Agencies) — Truce monitoring teams moved into Sri Lanka's front-line regions Friday as Tamil guerrillas and the Colombo government prepared for another round of peace talks, a senior minister announced here.

Energy Minister Anura Kumara Ratwatte said two committees headed by Norwegian monitors based for the eastern towns of Trincomalee and Batticaloa to begin observing the ceasefire pact which came into effect Sunday.

"We will have two more committees for the north when we have Canadian representatives arriving here over the weekend," said Ratwatte, who is also the junior defence minister.

He said the truce between security forces and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was holding on its sixth day Friday despite minor violations, which had been settled by respective local field commanders.

The minister said the government hoped to finalise dates for substantive political talks with the LTTE when the two sides open their third round of negotiations in the Tiger-held northern Jaffna peninsula Saturday.

The government's five-member delegation includes two military officers. For the first time, the LTTE had

permitted the airforce to land in Jaffna, with a helicopter due to bring in journalists to report on the talks.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who signed the truce agreement with LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran eight days ago, expressed the hope that the halt in violence could be continued beyond the initial two-week period agreed upon.

"I think we can go beyond two weeks and quickly get onto the political discussions," Ms. Kumaratunga told a small group of reporters at her Temple Trees residence after appointing the two Norwegians to head the monitoring teams.

Since winning parliamentary elections in August, Ms. Kumaratunga has vowed to grant "very extensive autonomy" to minority Tamils to end the ethnic conflict which has claimed over 30,000 lives in the last 23 years.

The two Norwegians, Audun Holm and Johan Gabrielsen, were named by Ms. Kumaratunga Thursday to head committees which will monitor the truce, becoming the first Westerners to be officially involved in Sri Lanka's peace process.

The monitors are registered with the Norwegian Refugee Council, which sends people for ceasefire monitoring functions abroad. They have previously worked in Yugoslavia, Lebanon and

Africa. Mr. Ratwatte predicted the truce monitors would have little work because local military commanders had established direct bilateral contacts and were able to resolve problems without using the observers as intermediaries.

"We have had cases of four armed LTTE cadres coming into areas near army camps. But we have settled these things and got assurances from LTTE field commanders that it will not happen again," Mr. Ratwatte said.

Previous ceasefire arrangements between the LTTE and the former United National Party government ended in failure, with both sides blaming each other for violations, and led to more bloodletting in the island's northeast.

Meanwhile, napa Sri Lankan Buddhists said Friday they are stepping up their campaign to get Pope John Paul II to withdraw remarks before he visits this mainly Buddhist island next week.

"The campaign is hotting up, and we have scheduled three public meetings this weekend seeking support for our stand that the Pope withdraw these remarks," Galage Punyawardena, spokesman for the Federation of Buddhist Organisations, told Reuters Friday.

He said meetings would be held in Buddhist centres in the southern towns of Galle and Matara and another at a ground at Moratuwa also in the south.

"There are other protests planned of a religious nature but it would be inappropriate to divulge them at this moment," he said.

Mr. Punyawardena's federation plans to lead a boycott of the Pope's visit on Jan. 20 and 21 if he does not withdraw controversial comments on Buddhism in his book *Crossing the Threshold Of Hope* published last October.

In his book, the Pope wrote: "The Buddhist doctrine of salvation constitutes the central point, or rather the only point of this system. Nevertheless, both the Buddhist tradition and the methods deriving from it have an almost exclusively negative soteriology (doctrine of salvation)."

Another passage reads: "Buddhism is in large measure an 'atheistic' system. We do not free ourselves from evil through the good which comes from God; we liberate ourselves only through detachment from the world, which is bad."

"The fullness of such a detachment is not union with God, but what is called nirvana, a state of perfect indifference with regard to the world," the Pope wrote.

Deng's health has declined — daughter

NEW YORK (R) — Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's health has declined significantly in recent months and he is unable to stand or walk, one of his daughters told the New York Times in an interview published in Friday's editions.

The daughter, whose name is Deng Rong but who has written a biography on her father under the pen name Xiao Rong, denied reports that the 90-year-old Chinese leader had entered a hospital as a Japanese newspaper reported earlier this week.

The comments by Ms. Deng, who said her father's health declined daily, did little to dispel concern that the Chinese leader's death was near.

The health of Mr. Deng, the most influential of a generation of leaders who came to power with Mao Tse-tung in 1949, has been the focus of intense international speculation in recent months as China prepares a transition to a younger generation of leaders.

The newspaper said Deng Rong's remarks about her father's condition were highly unusual for any relative of a Chinese leader to make. The paper said Ms. Deng, who was interviewed in Beijing, was to travel next week to New York and to Paris to promote the biography. It added she appeared eager to pre-empt the issue of his health.

"I know the reason why everyone is so concerned about my father's health — that's very clear," she told the paper.

"His health declines day by day. People have to understand that at this point,



Deng Xiaoping

he's 90 years old, an old man. And someday there will be a day when he passes away."

Mr. Deng's daughter said her father can no longer walk but refuses to use a wheelchair.

"He needs two people to support him... he feels that after he sits in a wheelchair, he won't be able to get up again. It's the natural order," she said.

She said her father remained at home at the family compound in Beijing.

On Thursday, the first picture of Mr. Deng shown in China for almost a year appeared on the front page of a Shanghai newspaper beside the headline "Comrade Xiaoping is healthy."

The picture in the Liberation Daily was apparently published to counter intense rumours in the past several days that China's reclusive patriarch was ill in the hospital.

The picture showed Mr. Deng sitting in a chair in Beijing's Zhongnanhai leadership compound watching a

fireworks display in nearby Tiananmen Square around the Oct. 1 National Day last year.

Mr. Deng's failure to appear in public at the spectacular fireworks show sparked rumours at the time that he was either seriously ill or had died. Shanghai's stock market plunged as a result.

The New York Times said Mr. Deng was believed to be suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease and perhaps diabetes and kidney dysfunction.

An unnamed Western diplomat in Beijing told the Times there were no signs of an imminent crisis in Mr. Deng's health, although Western embassies have increased their monitoring of major hospitals.

The diplomat said the Community Party leadership had completed its preparations for Mr. Deng's death and was confident that it could manage a stable transition to younger leaders led by President Jiang Zemin.

Mr. Deng's daughter, in the same interview, defended her father's record and spoke of his past mistakes only where he has acknowledged them.

She defended her father's decision to order military force used against student demonstrators in 1989, but said China's inexperience in riot control contributed to the tragic confrontation.

"It was a tragedy. No Chinese person wanted to see something happen like what happened then. Many people died, both among the ordinary people and among the military, and some of them died very cruel deaths," she said.

Michael Jackson files \$100m slander suit

LOS ANGELES (R) — Pop star Michael Jackson filed \$100 million lawsuit against Paramount Pictures Corp. producers for its tabloid TV show *Hard Copy* and a local radio station Thursday accusing them of slandering him.

The lawsuit contended *Hard Copy* reporter Diana Dimond falsely reported in a radio broadcast that there was "a renewed and 'red hot' police investigation... into new allegations of child molestation" against Jackson.

The entertainer, the target of a year-long child sex-abuse investigation until prosecutors announced last September no charges would be filed, had emphatically denied the latest reports. After promising to take legal action against "reckless members of the media," Jackson made good on his threat with a lawsuit that named Ms. Dimond and fellow *Hard Copy* producer Paramount which makes and distributes the show *Los Angeles* radio station KABC-AM and two of its talk-show hosts. It stated Jackson had filed the case "to redress a slanderous, vicious and wholly-fabricated story" about the existence of a 27-minute "X-rated" videotape purportedly showing the singer engaging in illegal conduct with a child.

Oprah admits smoking cocaine in her 20s

WASHINGTON (R) — Oprah Winfrey, host of the most-watched daytime U.S. television talk show, admitted during a programme to be aired Friday that she had smoked cocaine in her early twenties, the Washington Post reported. The paper in its Friday edition said Winfrey, who turns 41 this month, broke down Wednesday while taping a programme about recovering from drug abuse and admitted that she had also used drugs. The programme, taped in Chicago, dealt with the subject of women who have had drug problems. Four mothers were the guests including Patricia Gaines, a Washington Post reporter who has written a book about her own troubled life.

Winfrey's show, which has been nationally syndicated since 1986, is characterised by a personal tone. For instance, Winfrey revealed on the show that she had been raped at age 9 by a cousin, and then molested by others close to the family until she was 14. Deborah Jones, a spokeswoman for the show, said that on the programme taped Wednesday, "Oprah made a spontaneous admission to mothers battling drug addiction that she had also used drugs." Winfrey's admission came after a discussion with one woman, identified only as Charmaine, who said she currently smokes crack cocaine, but isn't sure whether she is an addict because she is still functioning in her daily life, the paper said.

Simpson jury trial to get under way next week

LOS ANGELES (R) — Judge Lance Ito has said opening arguments in the double-murder trial of U.S. sports legend O.J. Simpson would begin next Thursday or Friday.

The Superior Court judge said he would first rule on a vital defence motion to suppress evidence about the football legend's alleged history of physical and mental abuse of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson.

Simpson, an internationally-known sportscaster, actor and television pitchman, was arrested and charged with the murder of Nicole Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 17 following a bizarre slow-speed police chase across Los Angeles freeways which was televised around the world.

Simpson has pleaded "absolutely, 100 per cent" not guilty to the charges. The 47-year-old celebrity had been in jail since his arrest.

The case made global headlines after the bodies of his 35-year-old ex-wife and Goldman, 25, were found lying outside her luxury Brentwood townhouse in the early hours of June 13, where they had been stabbed and slashed to death the night before.

The media frenzy had been highlighted by gavel-to-gavel television coverage of often tedious pretrial court hearings and a long jury selection process, all leading up to the long-awaited opening arguments in the case.

Judge Ito said those arguments would be heard either Jan. 19 or Jan. 20 depending on when he ruled on the marital abuse question which he said would be either on Jan. 17 or Jan. 18. He would then need half a day to address the jury and the 12 alternates, who have been in sequestration, or court-ordered seclusion, since Wednesday.

Another half-day he said, would be taken up with court housekeeping chores in preparation for the jury trial.

Judge Ito spent the day hearing arguments from the defence which wants evidence of past marital discord suppressed and the prosecution which wants the jury to hear all about Simpson's alleged abusive treatment of Nicole since shortly after the two met in 1977.

Deputy District Attorney Lydia Bodin argued before the judge that O.J. Simpson killed his ex-wife when he found he could no longer dominate her.

Ms. Bodin withdrew allegations of 18 of the 62 explosive incidents made public in prosecution court papers Wednesday which she said chronicled the alleged pattern of abuse adding that the remainder were ample to prove Simpson's motive for murder.

California says flood damage to exceed \$300m

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Property damage from widespread flooding in California is likely to exceed \$300 million, state officials said in their first estimate of flood losses.

A series of powerful storms caused severe flooding in both northern and southern California this week inundating hundreds of homes and forcing thousands of people to evacuate.

Storms, high winds and floods have caused nine deaths in the last week, state officials said.

"We expect the total to go over \$300 million," said William Ruker, a spokesman for the California Office of Emergency Services.

Mr. Ruker said the estimate was preliminary and was a "ballpark figure" including damage to public and private property.

The estimate of damage from the floods which had been declared a major disaster by President Bill Clinton

is sharply higher than figures mentioned until now.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Director James Witt, in charge of the federal relief effort, Wednesday estimate damage at a minimum of \$50 million.

FEMA said over 4,090 flood victims applied for federal help in the first 24 hours since the disaster declaration.

The waters receded enough in many flooded areas Thursday to allow evacuated residents to go back to their homes to begin the task of cleaning up and totalling losses.

Police from San Francisco and other areas were on patrol in the small town of Guerneville 50 miles (80 km) north of San Francisco, as a precaution against possible looting.

Local officials advised residents to boil drinking water and to avoid contaminated or unrefrigerated food.

Farrakhan always denied role in Malcolm X killing

NEW YORK (R) — He paints himself as an heir to Malcolm X, the legendary firebrand of black pride in the United States, but in the last days of Malcolm's life he was his worst enemy.

Now Malcolm's 34-year-old daughter Qubilah Bahiyyah Shahazz — four years old when she saw her father gunned down in a Harlem ballroom — is accused of plotting to hire a hit-man to kill black separatist firebrand Louis Farrakhan.

She has pleaded not guilty and her mother says she was raised not to hate.

But the irony of the charge is heavy.

During Malcolm's life, Mr. Farrakhan moved from disciple to arch-foe. Thirty years after the assassination, Mr. Farrakhan praises Malcolm, calls himself his successor and is treated as such by many in the U.S. black community who think he stands as tall and firm against white America as Malcolm did.

His comments have stirred anger and pride the way Malcolm's did and like Malcolm, who once called John Kennedy's assassination a case of "chickens coming home to roost." Mr. Farrakhan has been upbraided for remarks like calling Hitler a "wickedly great man" and Judaism "a gutter religion."

But years ago his anger was aimed at Malcolm and the question Thursday was whether the past was catching up with the present.

Writing in 1965 in the black Muslim newspaper *Muhammad Speaks* just months before Farrakhan's murder, Mr. Farrakhan said, "the die is set and Malcolm shall not escape. Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death."

Mr. Farrakhan had remained faithful to black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad while Malcolm had broken with him and started a movement of his own, a movement

that unlike Mr. Farrakhan's reached out to whites to join in the fight against racism.

The assassination was allegedly planned in the Newark Mosque of Muhammad's Movement and Mr. Farrakhan preached there the night before the murder. Malcolm's family has long thought Mr. Farrakhan may have had a hand in the killing.

"I was not in any way involved in his murder. I did say those words but that's not the full statement. I said such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death and were it not for Elijah Muhammad's faith in God, it would have been so," he told ABC Television's Barbara Walters in an interview last year.

In the interview he admitted he contributed to the atmosphere of hate that surrounded Malcolm and added, "I was hurt by his assassination. I can't say that I approved and I really didn't disapprove. I was numb. But today looking back, Malcolm would have been much more valuable to us alive."

In press conferences that white reporters are allowed to cover, Mr. Farrakhan praises Malcolm and cloaks himself in his mantle.

But according to a new documentary film, *Brother Minister: The Assassination Of Malcolm X*, there is another side to Farrakhan.

The documentary shows a video made of a Farrakhan speech to his nation of Islam followers in 1993 in which he says:

"Was Malcolm your traitor or ours? And if we deal with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours? You just shut your mouth and stay out of it. Because pretty soon we are going to be a nation and a nation has got to be able to deal with cutthroats and turncoats... there are certain paths you don't cross."

1st U.S. soldier killed in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — The first American soldier killed during the four-month U.S. occupation of Haiti died Thursday morning in an exchange of gunfire with the driver of a van that drove past a tollbooth without stopping.

A second soldier was wounded and a Haitian civilian was killed in the incident.

Three U.S. soldiers involved in the international peacekeeping effort, two in Haiti and one during training in Puerto Rico, have committed suicide since the occupation began on Sept. 19. But none had been killed until Thursday.

The attack was only the second on an American soldier during the operation. A soldier was shot in the southern town of Les Cayes by an unidentified assailant shortly after the Americans arrived.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in a statement released late Thursday, offered his condolences to U.S. President Bill Clinton, to the family of the dead soldier and to his comrades and called the death a "deplorable act of violence."

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Republicans still relishing the trouncing they gave the Democrats in November are now climbing over each other to get their names on the ballot for the 1996 presidential race.

Candidates traditionally announce in autumn, but smelling blood from what looks like Bill Clinton's lame-duck presidency, many of the Republican Party's top guns rang in the New York by getting a jump on things.

Robert Dole, Senate majority leader and two-time presidential candidate, pushed ahead on his long-anticipated campaign Thursday by forming a fund-raising committee.

"I haven't yet officially thrown my hat in the ring, but you could say this is the first step," said Sen. Dole, adding he would make it official by April.

Texas Senator Phil Gramm, a staunch conservative who has long coveted a national political role, is expected to announce at the end of February, followed by former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander and Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter.

Former Vice President Dan Quayle has made his White House ambitions and his wife, Marilyn, came out swinging at all potential rivals this week, targeting Sen. Gramm in particular.

"He is not very well thought of in the Senate, even among Republicans themselves," she said at a business lunch where she was filling in for her husband.

Mr. Quayle was recuperating from an appendectomy, but his aides have said he will

U.N. renews Georgia observer mission

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The Security Council Thursday renewed until May 15 the mandate of a 136-member U.N. Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) where negotiations between the government and Abkhaz separatists are stalemated.

The vote in the 15-member Council was unanimous. UNOMIG works with, and monitors, a largely-Russian peacekeeping force of several thousand troops fielded by the Commonwealth of Independent States which is helping implement a ceasefire and separation of forces agreement reached last May 14.

Some 250,000 Georgians fled the Abkhaz region in 1993 when separatists, backed by mercenaries and arms from Russia's northern Caucasus region, drove out Georgian government troops in a lightning campaign.

The Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia adopted a constitution last Nov. 26 declaring Abkhazia to be a "sovereign democratic state."

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, in a recent report, said the core question of Abkhazia's political status remained far from being resolved and only a few hundred Georgian refugees had so far been able to return to Abkhazia.

He said that, in view of the intensity and proximity of the crisis in Russia's breakaway Caucasus region of Chechnya, where fierce fighting had been raging for the past month, "it is likely that political efforts to address the Abkhazia issue will remain in suspense for the time being."

But the secretary-general said he was convinced negotiations between the two sides were the only way this complex issue could be satisfactorily resolved.

The Council resolution renews UNOMIG's mandate encourages Dr. Ghali to continue his efforts aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the conflict over Abkhazia, "respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia."

It also calls on both parties to comply with commitments concerning the return of refugees and displaced persons in accordance with an agreement signed in Moscow last April 4. It particularly urges

the Abkhaz side to "accelerate the process significantly."

Meanwhile, hundreds of armed men gathered in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi Friday, saying they were ready to force the breakaway Republic of Abkhaz back into Georgia, the Interfax News Agency said here.

The men gathered outside the headquarters of the National Liberation Front, an organisation headed by former Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua and Defence Minister Tengiz Kitovani.

Interfax quoted some of the men as saying buses were ready to drive them to western Georgia, near to Abkhazia. The front has said it is powerful enough to launch its own military drive against Abkhazian secessionists.

Last week the breakaway Abkhazian government accused Georgian militants of staging several "terrorist incursions" onto its territory, blowing up a power line and kidnapping several Abkhaz policemen and women.

Abkhazia declared its independence from Georgia in 1992 and defeated Georgian troops in a year-long war, with Russia's covert help.

U.S. Republicans rush for presidential bids

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Republicans still relishing the trouncing they gave the Democrats in November are now climbing over each other to get their names on the ballot for the 1996 presidential race.

Candidates traditionally announce in autumn, but smelling blood from what looks like Bill Clinton's lame-duck presidency, many of the Republican Party's top guns rang in the New York by getting a jump on things.

Robert Dole, Senate majority leader and two-time presidential candidate, pushed ahead on his long-anticipated campaign Thursday by forming a fund-raising committee.

"I haven't yet officially thrown my hat in the ring, but you could say this is the first step," said Sen. Dole, adding he would make it official by April.

Texas Senator Phil Gramm, a staunch conservative who has long coveted a national political role, is expected to announce at the end of February, followed by former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander and Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter.

Former Vice President Dan Quayle has made his White House ambitions and his wife, Marilyn, came out swinging at all potential rivals this week, targeting Sen. Gramm in particular.

"He is not very well thought of in the Senate, even among Republicans themselves," she said at a business lunch where she was filling in for her husband.

Mr. Quayle was recuperating from an appendectomy, but his aides have said he will

announce his bid as soon as he is back on his feet.

And then of course there are the "New for President" buttons popping up around Washington, where Republican lawmakers have all but defied new House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Mr. Gingrich is widely credited with the mid-term win which delivered his party from minority status for the first time in 40 years, but he is unlikely to give up the glory for a long-shot presidential bid this time around.

Moreover, his trigger-happy style has raised eyebrows among members of his own party — who are happy nonetheless to ride on his coat-tails.

Last week, Sen. Gramm won a straw poll at a Republican convention in Louisiana and he immediately praised Mr. Gingrich's "Contract With America" platform as the party's manifesto.

The poll gave Sen. Gramm a whopping 72 per cent of the delegate votes, well ahead of 12 other likely candidates.

Those unlikely — and unannounced — contenders were quick to note that Sen. Gramm, 52, was the only one so far to voice his intentions and pointed out that the senator lobbied the delegates hard for weeks ahead of the convention.

"I'm not certain I'm a candidate yet, so Phil Gramm is (and) he worked hard at it," Sen. Dole said on CNN Television, adding: "He probably won the first of a thousand straw polls we're going to have between now and the time it really counts."

Arch-conservative commentator Pat Buchanan came

in second in the poll, followed by Mr. Alexander and former Housing Secretary Jack Kemp, who unsuccessfully challenged Mr. Bush in 1988.

Mr. Kemp put out feelers when he met Thursday with political advisers, but he alienated himself from the party by coming out against California's anti-immigration bill and generally failing to show proper party discipline.

Wisconsin and Massachusetts governors Tommy Thompson and William Weld are also potential contenders, and California Governor Pete Wilson's campaign against illegal immigration has boosted his national profile.

Governors, always popular among voters in presidential elections, might fare particularly well in 1996 if the anti-incumbent fever of the mid-term elections continues to turn the heat on those "bums" in Congress.

But for now Sen. Dole, who ran unsuccessfully in 1980 and 1988, is the favoured front-runner and a recent poll showed him running neck-and-neck with Mr. Clinton.

Some have raised concerns about Sen. Dole's advanced years — 71 — but by 1996 he will be 73 and that age was no liability for one of the most popular presidents in recent history, Ronald Reagan.

Meanwhile, arch conservative Jesse Helms chaired his first Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting Wednesday but steered clear of any confrontation with the administration of President Clinton.

Sen. Helms, who said last year that Mr. Clinton was

unfit as commander-in-chief, reserved his harsh comments for the news media, claiming that he has been demonised in the press since his Republican Party swept the Nov. 8 elections.

"Our friends in the news media have been busy speculating ever since Nov. 8 about the dark and dangerous things that they are so sure are about to happen," Sen. Helms said.

"Well, that perhaps was wishful thinking... which almost always ends up being wrong and it's certainly wrong this time."

Sen. Helms has distinguished himself in his 22-year career as a firebrand anti-Communist, a champion of right-wing leaders in Latin America and an opponent of sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

He sought to block an openly gay cabinet appointee he called a "damn lesbian" and pledged to reexamine cooperation with the United Nations, which he called the "longtime nemesis of millions of Americans."

China is likely to be one of the first places Sen. Helms will part company with the administration, pushing a more sympathetic line on Taiwan which is sure to rub Beijing the wrong way, according to analysts.

Sen. Helms also opposes U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions and was likely to use his legendary parliamentary skills to block diplomatic appointees he deems too liberal.

Sen. Helms was also expected to be much more critical of the deal on North Korea's nuclear programme.

Joplin, Zappa reach Rock Hall of Fame

NEW YORK (R) — Jains Joplin, Frank Zappa, Led Zeppelin, Neil Young, Marianne and the Vandellas and the Allman Brothers Band were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

The surviving member of led Zeppelin reunited to play several of their 1970s classics in celebration of the glittering ceremony at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Rolling Stone publisher Jann Wenner used the tenth annual induction dinner as the forum to announce the opening of the hall's permanent museum in Cleveland on Sept. 1, 1995.

Soul singer Al Green, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame by Natalie Cole, began the show singing his hit *Take*

Michael Jackson
\$100m
under suit

ANGELES (R) — Pop Michael Jackson filed a \$100-million lawsuit against the Hard Copy and a Los Angeles station Thursday, accusing them of slander and libel. Jackson's lawsuit, filed in the Superior Court, says the station's broadcast of a "Hard Copy" report on January 10, 1994, which alleged that Jackson had a "lewd" relationship with a minor, was defamatory and false. Jackson says the report was "a malicious and intentional attempt to harm his reputation and to cause him financial loss."

ah admits
king cocaine
20s

WASHINGTON (R) — A Washington Post article last week, which said that a "king" of cocaine was being smuggled into the United States from Mexico, was "a malicious and intentional attempt to harm his reputation and to cause him financial loss," according to a lawsuit filed by the king of cocaine, a 20-year-old man who has been arrested several times for drug offenses.

n. Zappa

Hall of Fame

MANILA (R) — Pope John Paul II, who is the first pope to visit the Philippines, was welcomed by a massive crowd of millions of Filipinos in Manila on Friday. The pope's visit is a major event for the Philippines, which is a predominantly Catholic country. The pope is expected to stay in Manila for several days before traveling to other parts of the Philippines.

Murayama returns from cordial U.S. summit

TOKYO (R) — Japanese Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama returned Friday from an upbeat but low-profile summit with U.S. President Bill Clinton that Japanese diplomats hope signifies bilateral ties are back on a sounder footing.

"I think it is a very good thing," a senior Japanese diplomat said aboard Mr. Murayama's special government plane en route to Tokyo when asked his view of the relatively low level of attention paid by the U.S. media to Wednesday's summit in Washington.

Summits, the diplomat said, should not be about high-profile friction but should provide a chance to exchange views on issues of mutual concern.

In a sharp shift from last February's stony standoff over trade, Mr. Clinton and Mr. Murayama took pains to put mutual security and economic interests first at this week's talks.

"Step by step, the two nations are building a new post-cold war relationship," said an editorial in the English-language Japan Times. The summit "has advanced this effort in a rather quiet way."

The summit, one of three meetings between the two leaders set for 1995, comes at a time when some analysts say the bilateral alliance is weakening due to domestic political woes in both countries and growing attention by both to Asian nations outside Japan.

Japanese officials said they hoped the summit would start a process of discussions aimed at strengthening ties.

"What we are proposing to the U.S. government (is that) we should like to have a more constructive and positive relationship," Foreign Ministry spokesman Teruaki Terada told reporters in Washington after the summit.

"How can we do that? Partly through enhanced global cooperation," Mr. Terada said. "At the same time, we maintain interest in having more policy coordination. A good example of that is coordination with respect to North Korea, and progressively we may add more fields."

North Korea in fact topped the agenda at the summit, where the two leaders



Tomichi Murayama

emphasized joint efforts to contain North Korea as a disruptive force in the Asia-Pacific region.

Economic friction took a back seat.

Mr. Clinton played down Tokyo's trade surplus and hailed recent pacts on specific sectors under the so-called Economic Framework, a 1993 agreement which spawned much acrimonious debate. The president said the surplus was "too high" but attributed the bulge largely to Japan's sluggish economy.

He welcomed a pact, clinched on the eve of the summit, to open Japan's huge financial services sectors to foreign firms.

Japanese newspapers Friday welcomed the change in mood.

"The special characteristic of the U.S.-Japan summit was that it avoided focusing on economic issues," said an editorial in financial daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun. "We would like to welcome if there has been a change in the Clinton administration's policy towards Japan."

But while in a lower key, the summit did take note of a remaining point of disharmony in bilateral ties — a sticky dispute over access to Japan's market for cars and car parts.

Talks on automotive trade, which accounts for two-thirds

of Japan's \$60 billion annual surplus with the United States, are set to resume later this month after stalling when the two sides failed to reach agreement in late September.

The two leaders also agreed to cooperate for the success of the next meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum next November in Osaka, western Japan.

But they addressed no specifics on how Tokyo, often criticized for an inability to take diplomatic leadership, would mediate members' diverse views on implementing last year's agreement to tear down trade barriers by the year 2020.

Meanwhile Mr. Murayama returned home Friday to find his own Socialist Party teetering on the brink of a breakup.

Sadao Yamahana, Mr. Murayama's predecessor as party chairman, announced a list of 25 Socialist lawmakers, including himself, who will form a separate voting bloc in parliament.

But Mr. Yamahana urged the party not to expel the rebels, saying they were the forerunners of a new party which the Socialists hoped to create for their long-term survival in Japan's turbulent political landscape.

"I understand that the party has not conditioned any separate bloc in the past,"

Mr. Yamahana told reporters. "But I hope the party will make a prudent judgment because such a considerable number of deputies are involved."

The 24 rebels — 17 members in the House of Representatives and seven in the House of Councillors — account for about 17 per cent of the 138 Socialist deputies.

Mr. Murayama, who has supported the idea of launching a new Socialist-led party with liberals and academics — but at a more cautious pace — is to consult aides before the party's executive committee discusses the problem on Thursday.

While in Washington he urged a possible expulsion of the rebels, calling the break-away move "rash and immature."

Construction Minister Koken Nosaka demanded a purge. But another Socialist cabinet member, Labour Minister Manso Hamamoto, called on the party to refrain from a "devastating quarrel."

Mr. Yamahana has reaffirmed his support for the government of Mr. Murayama, elected as a compromise premier in June by a coalition of convenience numerically dominated by the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The Socialists, formally called the Social Democratic Party (SDP), have welded the swing vote in parliament since the scandal-tainted LDP lost its 37-year grip on power in general elections in July 1993.

But they face the prospect of disastrous losses in the next general elections, likely by the end of this year, due to an electoral system they themselves helped overhaul.

An anti-LDP coalition, led by power-broker and former LDP Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, had governed Japan until the SDP bolted from the group and took the LDP as bedmates.

The anti-LDP coalition forced through parliament a bill to replace multiple-seat constituencies with single-seat districts in a move to curb corruption.

The LDP still remains the biggest force in parliament with 200 seats in the 511-seat lower house, against the SDP's 70, and 95 in the upper house.

Chirac makes pitch for left vote

PARIS (R) — Conservative presidential candidate Jacques Chirac sought to woo French leftist voters Friday, calling for stronger action to combat unemployment and poverty.

A new opinion poll, meanwhile, suggested that Mr. Chirac could reach a run-off against hot favourite Prime Minister Edouard Balladur in the April-May election, putting him level with or ahead of any Socialist contender on the first ballot.

Paris Mayor Chirac denounced Mr. Balladur for maintaining a "phony suspense" about his so far undeclared candidacy and said the premier's policies were inadequate to confront France's social, economic and political woes.

Urging a greater focus on the underprivileged and denouncing technocracy, he continued a populist pitch launched this week with the publication of his book *France For All*.

Mr. Chirac, twice prime minister, denied he was a sudden convert to leftist social concerns, saying his Gaullist RPR party had long stressed such issues.

"Today we face a fractured France, so this means we need a social aspect... it has become essential," he said in an interview with France-Inter Radio.

He criticised Mr. Balladur for holding out the prospect of cutting unemployment by a million over the next five years without saving jobs. The number of jobless now stands at a near-record

3.3 million or 12.6 per cent of the work force.

Latest polls show Mr. Chirac's chances of reaching a May 7 run-off against Mr. Balladur have improved.

A poll for the weekly *Le Point*, taken this week amid a blitz of publicity over Mr. Chirac's book, showed he would score about 20 per cent in the first round, up about four points from recent surveys. Mr. Balladur is polling between 25 and 29 per cent.

The IPSOS poll showed Mr. Chirac either beating or running level with any Socialist candidate, including former Culture Minister Jack Lang and former party chief Lionel Jospin.

But the same poll showed Mr. Balladur would beat Mr. Chirac in a run-off by 66 to 34 per cent. Mr. Chirac's backers reckon he would be able to pick up votes if thrown into a direct confrontation with the more reserved Balladur.

The left has been casting about for a saviour since former presidential frontrunner Jacques Delors, outgoing head of the European Commission, decided last month not to run.

Mr. Chirac conceded that powerful Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, the most popular cabinet minister, was backing Mr. Balladur for the presidency along with most of the centre-right cabinet.

The only supporters Mr. Chirac named for himself were Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, Culture Minister Jacques Toubon and National Assembly speaker Philippe

Seguin.

Mr. Chirac sniped at Mr. Balladur's boast that his government was the most reformist in decades, saying "the reforms that remain to be made are far greater."

Mr. Balladur says France is on the road to recovery, in stark contrast to Mr. Chirac's message that the nation is in crisis.

A Balladur-Chirac run-off would be the first all-conservative contest since 1969, when Gaullist Georges Pompidou defeated centrist Alain Poher after Socialist Gaston Defferre had fallen at the first hurdle with just five per cent.

In a letter published by the newspaper *Le Monde*, Mr. Pasqua told Mr. Chirac, his longtime political colleague, that Mr. Balladur "appears to me the person best placed to defend our ideas and unite a broad majority of the French peoples."

Mr. Pasqua said in the letter he had taken his decision in the national interest and would try to preserve the unity of the Gaullist RPR movement, to which Mr. Chirac and Mr. Balladur also belong.

"I will act with the firm intention of working, when the moment comes, to reunite all those who belong (to the Gaullist movement), so that the victory of one of our people does not translate into a defeat for the others," he wrote.

Political commentators said Mr. Pasqua was hoping to obtain the premiership in exchange for supporting Mr.

Balladur's bid.

Mr. Pasqua campaigned strongly towards the end of last year for U.S.-style primary elections to be held to choose a single candidate for the French right before the election campaigns themselves begin. But to no avail.

"Edouard Balladur: and you took the decision to stand, and it is not for me to judge that. You know how much I regret this situation," Ms. Pasqua said in the letter, dated Thursday.

"All Gaullists... are therefore confronted with a choice and a decision which is difficult and has serious consequences," he wrote.

Recalling that he had supported Mr. Chirac in 1974 elections, Mr. Pasqua said he had done so because he believed Mr. Chirac was the most likely candidate to win for the French right.

"For the same reasons which have made me follow you since 1974, I have decided to give my support to Edouard Balladur... I want, in this campaign, to safeguard the unity and the future of our movement, which takes precedence over the fate of each of us individually."

"I am telling you my decision privately before making it public. I know that you understand the reasons, and above all that which has always inspired us: The interest of the country must come first."

The letter ended, "Yours in All Friendship, My Dear Jacques."

Rao says up to India, Pakistan to end Kashmir row

NEW DELHI (R) — Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao said Friday India would accept U.S. help in settling a dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, but that the two countries would eventually have to resolve differences themselves.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said Thursday Washington hoped that by forging closer ties with both Pakistan and India it could help the longtime foes avoid a fourth, and catastrophic, war.

Mr. Rao was asked by a reporter before the start of a meeting with Mr. Perry Friday if the United States had a role to play in helping India and Pakistan resolve their dispute over Kashmir.

"We take help from everywhere. All friends help, offer help," Mr. Rao said. "But eventually it's India and Pakistan who have to settle it themselves."

India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since 1947, both stake a claim to Kashmir.

Pakistan wants the issue to be settled through a United Nations-sponsored plebiscite. India rejects a plebiscite and says the dispute should be settled through bilateral

talks, as agreed by the countries' leaders in 1972.

Indian Armed Forces in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir have been fighting Muslim rebels who launched a rebellion four years ago in which more than 17,000 people have been killed.

India accuses Pakistan of training and arming the separatists, Islamabad says it offers only political and diplomatic support.

Mr. Perry said Thursday that the United States was "fearful" there could be another war between the neighbours, and wanted to do

everything it could to reduce the risk.

The U.S. Defence Secretary said that by visiting Pakistan and India this week he hoped to help improve relations with both countries so they would consider the United States a trusted friend.

Mr. Perry said he delivered a letter from U.S. President Bill Clinton to Mr. Rao.

Mr. Clinton urged the Indian leader to support an agreement India and the United States signed Thursday calling for stronger military ties and increased cooperation in defence production and research, Mr. Perry said.

Minister hints at flexibility in Bangladesh crisis

DHAKA (R) — A Cabinet minister suggested Friday that the Bangladesh government was prepared to be flexible over a constitutional problem in resolving a debilitating 10-month-old political crisis.

The opposition, headed by Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina, has demanded that Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia step aside and allow a neutral caretaker government to supervise fresh general elections.

Mrs. Zia announced on Dec. 29, a day after the opposition submitted resignations from parliament en masse, that she was ready to step down 30 days before general elections due in 1996.

That left an unresolved constitutional problem if Mrs. Zia's offer was accepted by the opposition, which has so far rejected it. The constitution says executive power

lies with the prime minister. If there is no prime minister, no one can officially wield power.

Negotiators have worked late into the night trying to resolve the problem over the past few days, with Mrs. Zia saying publicly she would not accept a constitutional amendment to allow President Abdur Rahman Biswas to head a neutral government to supervise elections.

But Commerce and Information Minister Shamsul Islam said in an interview Friday that Mrs. Zia's stand might be flexible.

"We can correct the situation in parliament. We can make changes to the law," he said. "There is still scope for discussion about that," Mr. Islam added in reference to a constitutional amendment.

Ms. Hasina led the opposition in a walk-out of parliament last February after

accusing Mrs. Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP) of rigging a by-election, evidence she said of the ruling party being prepared to do anything to stay in power.

The Awami League campaign for new elections has grown steadily more aggressive since the walk-out. In December and early this month, it staged a series of strikes that virtually closed down Dhaka, the capital city of seven million people.

It has threatened to stage more strikes later this month unless Mrs. Zia steps down. But Mr. Islam said it was now up to Sheikh Hasina to lead the opposition back into parliament so a solution could be found to a crisis that has worried businessmen and foreign aid donors who fund nearly all of poor Bangladesh's development budget.

"To institutionalise a solution, we all have to go back to parliament," he said. "We can't solve this problem on the streets."

Mr. Islam said the government had made all the concessions while the Awami League had made none and that Mrs. Zia's agreement to step down ahead of general elections gave Mrs. Hasina what she wanted and allowed the opposition to claim victory.

"Now we expect the opposition to act as statesmen in the interest of the country and come back to parliament," he said.

Parliamentary Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali has delayed a decision on whether to accept the opposition resignations, analysts and diplomats said he has thus gained more time for negotiations to hammer out a solution between the two foes.

Russia, U.S. and others fail on chemical arms pact

LONDON (R) — Russia, the United States and most other countries have failed to ratify a treaty designed to banish chemical weapons from the face of the earth in time for it to take effect this week.

The treaty, which bans the use, production, and storage of chemical weapons and provides for tough verification measures to prevent cheating, was signed by more than 120 countries amid much fanfare in Paris exactly two years ago.

Chemical weapons, often known as the "poor man's atomic bomb" because they can be cheap and easy to make, were first used with devastating effect in the trenches of World War I.

At the Paris conference the declared aim was that the treaty would come into force after two years once national parliaments in 65 countries had ratified the agreement. Diplomats said this was not now likely to happen until next year at the earliest.

They said only 19 had so far signed including Spain, Australia, Germany and Mexico. Many of the others who have completed ratification — like Fiji, Mauritius, the Cook Islands and the Maldives — are hardly major players in arms control.

Russia and the United States, which along with Iraq are the only countries to admit possession of chemical weapons, had pushed hard to complete the treaty along with other leading U.N.

members such as France, Britain and China.

But despite widespread concern that weapons of mass destruction could fall into the hands of terror groups or rogue states in an unstable post-cold war world, none of these countries has yet ratified the agreement.

Diplomats said the reason in most countries was that national parliaments had been swamped with more pressing business.

Pope energised by rapturous Philippines

MANILA (R) — Pope John Paul II, apparently energised by the rapturous welcome he has received in the Philippines, showed little sign Friday of the ill health that has plagued him for months.

Officials said he ignored elevators installed at the Malacanang Presidential Palace and walked up a long flight of stairs to meet President Fidel Ramos.

In the evening, drawn onto a balcony of the apostolic nunciature, where he is staying, by serenading choirs and chants of "we love you," he stood and listened fondly to the singing.

"Philippines have marvellous voices," he told the singers. The Pope and Mr. Ramos met alone for 20 about minutes, seeking through per-

sonal contact to heal a rift between state and church in Asia's only Christian country.

"I briefed the holy father on the social reform agenda of the government and my commitment to implement social reforms hand-in-hand with the continuing economic progress of the country," Mr. Ramos said in a statement.

A church statement said the two were expected to discuss the "boiling population issue," but Mr. Ramos did not say if they discussed in detail the government's birth-control campaign, which has brought him into conflict with the church.

Officials quoted the 74-year-old Pope John Paul as calling "unique" his recep-

tion in the Philippines, the first stop in a gruelling four-nation tour that will also take him to Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka.

More than a million people turned out to welcome him Wednesday and crowds continued to pack the streets as he travelled from event to event, erupting in cheers as he waved at them from inside his armoured "popemobile."

"Seeing him so close was a gift from God," said Lina Estrella, 67, who travelled from Zamboanga, north of Manila, to see the Pope for the second time. She also saw him during his first papal visit to Manila in 1981.

A government minister said he was satisfied security was sufficient, despite a hunt

for a man of Palestinian origin named as head of a gang out to harm the Pope.

Senior security sources said agents were hunting Abdul Mahmood Abdul Karim, a 26-year-old electronics expert, and his Filipina girlfriend. They said he carried a Pakistani passport.

The Pope seemed to get renewed energy from a mass for youth leaders and a meeting with tens of thousands of delegates to the 10th World Youth Day.

He stood for a long time during a mass for foreign and Filipino youth leaders and paid close attention as a student leader attacked politicians for graft and the church for refusing to listen to its younger members.

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Nuclear double standards

RECENT REPORTS about a Russian agreement to complete an Iranian nuclear facility at a cost of \$800 million must have alarmed many governments for fear that the Iranian nuclear programme could end up becoming military. We can understand and even sympathise with the regional and international anxiety over the apparent determination of Tehran to go nuclear. What we cannot comprehend though is the double standards being observed on this issue under which some countries seem to have a sacrosanct right to develop and possess nuclear weapons and others which cannot.

We are not thinking only about Israel's acquisition of nuclear bombs, but generally about the whole nuclear club which seems to be a privileged association for some of the countries and not for others. If there is something awful about developing mass destruction arsenals, then it should be terrible for all the states that still have them and not serve only as grounds to prevent others from enjoying the same capability. There had been considerable noise made about India and Pakistan going nuclear. Before these two countries there was an equal concern about China's nuclear programme. The international fury about these three countries have since subsided after it became amply clear that they insist on the application of one single standard on all countries of the world. Belatedly, the alarm was sounded against North Korea's plan to develop its nuclear capability as well. To be sure, other countries in Latin America are also on the verge of having their own nuclear bombs for one reason or another. Africa and the Middle East cannot be expected to lag behind forever unless and until a more satisfactory system of nuclear control is articulated and executed in a fair manner. Above all, there is no more room for a double standard in this context. We either outlaw all mass destruction weapons including nuclear warheads or we do not ever. But to keep on preaching the gospel that certain countries can possess them is simply no effective way to reverse nuclear proliferation.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE QATARI foreign ministry's undersecretary's visit to Jordan reflects the reality that Qatar and Jordan continue to maintain strong brotherly relations regardless of inter-Arab differences and the consequences of the Gulf crisis, said Al Rai Arabic daily. The paper said relations between Jordan and Qatar continue to prosper with new protocols that regulate cultural, economic and political relations and this was reaffirmed by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker in his talks with the Qatari official this week. The Qatari official's statement that his country was counting on close cooperation with Jordan and his suggestion that the two countries set up a joint bank and a joint university displays Doha's resolve to bolster inter-Arab ties and shows that Qatari rulers respect and appreciate Jordan's policies at all levels, added the daily. In order to further bolster bilateral ties, the two countries are now involved in preparing the ground for the higher joint committee meeting in Doha in April, said the daily, which expressed belief that these strong ties would open the door wide for Jordanian-Gulf ties to prosper.

AL DUSTOUR daily bitterly criticised Israel for refusing to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There is no justification for Israel not to sign the treaty which has been accepted by all other countries of the Middle East, stressed the paper. Israel is rumoured to possess at least 200 nuclear warheads, which are used to threaten Arab states and exercise pressure on them to make peace with the Jewish state, said the paper. It is ironic to see Israel demanding that countries as far away from Tel Aviv as Iran halt their nuclear programmes while it persists on rejecting the Non-Proliferation Treaty, continued the paper. The paper said that the atmosphere of peace should not be marred or allowed to be poisoned by Israel's adamant stand. Real peace, it said, requires the Jewish state to allow international inspection of its nuclear facilities and join the Arab states in seeking a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Masa Keilani

King, Rabin talks confirm commitment to peace accord

NO DOUBT Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to Amman and his talks with His Majesty King Hussein late Thursday served as a reaffirmation of Israeli and Jordanian commitment to implementing the Oct. 26 peace treaty between the two countries signed. Comments made by His Majesty and Mr. Rabin after their talks clearly indicated this to be the case. As we also understand, Mr. Rabin wanted to touch base with the new government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and discuss means to accelerate the implementation of the peace treaty.

Mr. Rabin's visit itself was a resounding reminder to everyone that Jordan and Israel are also determined to make good their pledge not to allow peace between them to be a cold peace. The visit was arranged in a matter of hours in direct contacts between King Hussein and the Israeli prime minister and there appeared to have little in the way of protocol or any other delicacies that stood in the way of the head of a government of a country with which Jordan is at peace flying into the Kingdom and leaving after a round of cordial talks as the case should be in any event.

What is of immediate interest to the man of the street in Jordan is whether the visit helped advance the cause of improving his lot, and whether Mr. Rabin's talks with the King covered any of those issues. But then, the reality remains that the peace treaty on its own is no document that guarantees economic returns of peace; it is something that restores Jordan's territorial and water rights, ending decades of tensions and apprehension as to the intentions of Israel, where headline Likudniks had been touting the "Jordan-is-Palestine" theory.

Beyond that, it is largely up to Jordan and Jordanians to work towards achieving the national economic objectives in the climate of peace, stability and security that was brought in by the peace treaty. And that is where we all should focus on. Quite realistically, we simply cannot expect anyone to dump millions of dollars in our country and hope to pick up from there.

First and foremost, capital does not come to any country for sentimental reasons. Sound business logic and hopes of lucrative returns unimpeded by government controls and bureaucracy are the factors that would prompt any

businessman worth his salt to invest in any country. As such, we have to look inwards and see whether Jordan, as a country, government and people, offers such facilities. Sadly, we have to go a long way ahead before we could say that. However, as we can judge from the hectic pace of work conducted by the Royal Commission for Reform and Modernisation chaired by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, we have taken major strides, but the pace of the moves from that point is lacking in speed.

Hopefully, the government of Sharif Zeid and Parliament would move quickly to endorse and enact the necessary amendments to legislation and new laws that offer high incentives to investors, both local and foreign. As experts repeatedly affirm, the race for international capital is getting too fierce and it would take an extra effort on the part of Jordan to invite some of the moving capital into investments in the Kingdom.

At the same time, it was heartening to hear Mr. Rabin talking about quick moves to arrive at a trade agreement and predict that Jordan would soon be able to export its products to Israel. That is one area where Jordan would have a slight edge if its private and public sectors adopt careful steps and adopt a determined approach that addresses the quality requirements of Israeli importers.

On the political front, it is a safe assumption that Mr. Rabin discussed with King Hussein the problems Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) are facing in implementing their autonomy accord and that the Israeli prime minister sought to benefit from the viewpoints of His Majesty. While Jordan has no direct role in the affair, it is only true that Mr. Rabin would like to draw from the immense experience of the King as the best conceptual means to go about doing it. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who is reportedly due in Jordan soon after months of speculation over the state of ties between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), might also want to hear the King's views on the issue (at least that is what one would expect Mr. Arafat to do in an atmosphere of coherent relations and coordination for the benefit of Palestinians and Jordanians).

M. KAHIL



People expect new government to keep its promises

By Elia Nasrallah

THE LOCAL Arabic press tackled a variety of topics in the past week in editorials and in columnists' articles. These mainly focused on the formation and mission of the new government of Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, domestic issues, pan-Arab affairs and the peace process.

In discussing the new government, Saleh Al Qalab, a writer in Al Dostour said that Jordanians expect the new government to keep its promises to the public. The writer said that in light of past experiences, one cannot expect everything to be carried out due to delays by Parliament in ratification of laws. We expect from the new government at least the minimum level of action in dealing with all abuses and violations of democracy, corruption and soaring prices, said the writer. He said the new government also ought to give due attention to the farmers and their problems and other issues of which the new prime minister is fully aware.

This view was echoed by Hussein Abu Ruman, a writer in Al Rai, who said the public wants the government to deal promptly with the economic situation and the soaring prices as well as the deterioration in the democratic process in the country. The writer said that His Majesty the King's letter of designation to the new government was comprehensive and pointed out a great deal of tasks that should be implemented to bolster the role of institutions and ensure the rule of law. These, he said, require relentless efforts from the new government.

Ali Safadi, a writer in Al Dostour, demanded that the new government ensure

health services, reduce soaring prices and improve the social environment as a whole. The writer said that most citizens are optimistic that the many promises that have been given them before would be fulfilled by the new government, especially as it is apparently supported by the majority of the Lower House of Parliament members.

Mohammad Ibrahim Saoud, a writer in Al Dus-

there is a confusion in these timetables for the families who might have some children in the university and others in schools. The present situation does not give time or chance to the heads of these families to plan for vacations.

Nazih Qousus, a writer in Sawt Al Shaab, drew attention to the collapse of the bridge near the Seventh Circle, describing that as a dangerous incident. He said

Tareq Masarweb said that the Jordanian people support the Chechens in their desperate fight for freedom. The columnist, who writes for Al Rai daily, said that the Chechens are seeking freedom and independence and end of hegemony in all matters; and through their heroic stand they are winning the sympathy and support of the majority of nations, he said.

The Chechens require from Jordan not mere words of support because sympathy does not help their struggle for freedom to end successfully, said Issa Shneibi in Al Dostour. The writer said that Jordanians ought to arrange for meaningful and material support for the Chechens as soon as possible to help them fight off the aggression.

Commenting on Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to Jordan, a writer in Al Rai said that Jordanians are largely disappointed with the slow pace of the peace process and are frustrated for not seeing any good results of the peace treaty with the Jewish state. Sultan Al Hartab said that numerous issues seem to be still suspended in the air and nothing has been achieved on the ground since the signing of the treaty last October. Furthermore, Jordan's port of Aqaba is suffering because the peace treaty allowed the visitors coming through Israel or Israeli tourists to visit Petra and Wadi Rum and return to Israel to stay in its hotels, said the writer. He said that Israel's repressive measures against the Palestinians and the delay in implementation of the Oslo agreement have been causing so much frustration to the Jordanian

people.

Ties that bind cypriots become source of discord

By Michael Janson

NICOSIA — Twenty years of de facto political partition has not produced a complete physical division of Cyprus. Indeed, the island is more than ever united by the infrastructure — electricity cables and water pipes — laid down during the last years of British colonial rule and the first years of the republic.

But this physical unity has led to dissent. The latest political crisis between the Turkish Cypriot north and the Greek Cypriot south has been over electricity. With electricity cuts of 12-14 hours a day in northern Nicosia and the towns and villages of the Turkish Cypriot area have been "blackout" by the introduction of noisy generators in homes and shops, setting up a cacophony in the streets whenever cuts occur. A desperate Turkish Cypriot leader, Rafi Denkash, has even threatened to bomb southern power stations unless they supply more electricity to the north.

After the Turkish army invaded and divided the island in 1974, the Greek Cypriots agreed to go on supplying the Turkish Cypriot area with electricity, free of charge, in exchange for water from the Turkish-occupied Morphou area. Once the Greek Cypriots developed the water resources of their area, there was no trade-off. Then the north, which did not develop its own sources, became a net importer of water from the south. This did not mean the north was dependent on the south, however, because both sides of the divided capital continued to receive water from Turkish-held Morphou. But this water was too saline for consumption and had to be mixed with sweet water from the Troodos mountains provided by the Greek Cypriots, creating interdependence in supply as well as shared pipelines.

The electricity shortages developed several years ago because of rising demand on both sides of the dividing Green Line. Turkish Cypriot delay in developing their own capacity and Greek Cypriot postponement of construction of a new power plant. But the situation became acute only last September, after an explosion wrecked a Turkish Cypriot plant before it became operational.

Last week, Mr. Denkash

accused Greek Cypriot "saboteurs" of tampering with parts for the new plant while "in transit". However, a U.N. technical expert said the explosion had been caused by faulty welding during construction. This has forced the Turkish Cypriots to rely on power from two back-up gas turbine generators, which are unsuited to extended use and cost \$60,000 a day to run, and on surplus from the Greek Cypriots. "Until 1993 there was generally a surplus," stated the U.N. expert, "but last year demand exceeded supply and the Greek Cypriot electricity authority gave priority to paying rather than non-paying consumers. Unbilled consumption from 1974 through 1994 has reached Cyprus pounds 147 million (about \$300 million)", of which the Turkish Cypriot consumer paid "only a fraction" to their non-paying authorities. On Jan. 1, however, prices in the north were raised to a higher level than in the south. This will harm both the individual consumer, who has a lower standard of living than that in the south, and industry, forcing prices up and making it less competitive.

The electricity crisis has come at a very bad moment for the Turkish Cypriot economy. In her new Year's Message, the Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller told Turkish Cypriots that they would have to stand on their own feet economically although they could expect continuing development aid. This tough talk came in response to criticism in the Turkish Cypriot press of Mrs. Ciller's government, which was accused of withholding an estimated \$200 million in budgetary support.

Mainland Turkey has apparently taken the attitude that the Turkish Cypriots will, from now on, have to share in the economic fortunes, and misfortunes, of the motherland, recently plagued by record high inflation of 149.6 per cent and a 61 per cent depreciation in the value of the Turkish lira.

This level of inflation has been imported into the small, dependent economy of northern Cyprus where its impact has had a far greater impact than in the much larger mainland economy. Imported inflation has also combined with an accumulation of adverse local factors to produce inflation of 200-225 per cent.

LETTERS

Vital service not appreciated

To the Editor:

AS THE Director of the AMIDEAST office in Jordan, I was happy to read Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoub's article (Jordan Times, Jan. 5-6) on "Cultural orientation and study abroad," as he is tackling a subject of concern to us.

As you may be aware, AMIDEAST is the place that all Jordanian students, interested in a U.S. education, must visit to take the required tests, certify documents and receive information on U.S. higher education. In addition to our advising services that focus on how to get an admission to a U.S. university, AMIDEAST offers regularly scheduled group sessions on cultural, social and academic life in the U.S. Each year thousands of students visit our office to attend group advising sessions, use the library and other services, yet, the session on "Pre-Departure Orientation" is the least attended. Three weeks ago we offered a Pre-Departure Orientation for those who will begin their studies in the spring of 1995. After announcing it for weeks, through our office and the U.S. embassy (when students were issued their visas), only two people attended. Our experience is that unless students are required to attend such a session they won't. Those of us in the field of international education know the importance of being prepared for a new cultural experience. Information available at such sessions is the most valuable and beneficial for anyone who is about to embark on a new life experience, but most students are unconvinced of the need. Few seem to want to know the realities of that experience.

Since this is an obvious concern of Dr. Majdoub's, as it is ours, I would be interested in hearing any suggestions from others on how to encourage students to be more prepared. AMIDEAST would also be willing to cooperate with any other organisation, educational institution etc. to offer these services to the public.

Janine R. El Tal,
Country Director,
AMIDEAST/Jordan,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Jordan, Israel

(Continued from page 1)

peace treaty," Mr. Rabin said. "Therefore His Majesty the King and I have agreed to let the people concerned daily with the problem by the 25th of this month to reach agreement, to try to accelerate the timetable of tourism, of problem of trade and commerce by which Jordan will be able to export commodities and products to Israel and other issues that will make the peace treaty the kind of a peace treaty that the man in the street will feel..."

Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur was quoted as saying that "the Jordanian people would like to see the concrete results of peace and Rabin took decisions in this direction."

"It is unfortunately undeniable that there is hostility towards Israel among the Jordanian people," Mr. Gur was quoted as saying by the AFP.

A press conference expected to be held after the King's talks with Mr. Rabin did not materialise. There was no explanation why it was called off.

However, the King briefly answered reporters' questions as Mr. Rabin and the delegation accompanying him were flying out.

The outcome of the talks, he said, was that "we are determined to implement what we have agreed in the peace treaty as rapidly as possible."

When the Washington De-

claration was signed on June 25, leading to an accelerated pace in negotiations that led to the Oct. 26 treaty, "we both agreed to be the shepherds of the process," said the King.

The King emphasised that Thursday's meeting was very important since it underlined the approach that "beyond what the world would hope to contribute, we would like to do whatever we can between us directly."

The King brushed aside a suggestion that Jordanians were disappointed with what they saw as the slow pace of dividends reaching them.

"I don't think that is a fact at all," said the King. "The peace treaty does not mean overnight changes. I have told my people it would take time and efforts."

In the meantime, the King noted, there have been major changes in the Jordanian-Israeli equation. "There is a human face to the other side... we have an international border... (and) the problem of water has been resolved," he said.

It was Mr. Rabin's fourth visit to Jordan and first after peace treaty was signed. He was accompanied by Chief of Staff Ehud Barak, Military Intelligence Chief Uri Saguy, Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin and deputy head of Mossad Efraim Halevy, whose name has been mentioned as a possible nominee as Israel's ambassador to Jordan.

Mubarak to visit Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan wanted the final resolution to take note of its role as guardian of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem. The PLO, supported by some of the influential Arab countries, rejected the Jordanian language and included a reference to Saudi Arabia.

The summit adopted a resolution which stressed that Jerusalem was an integral part of Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and declared it capital of a future Palestinian state.

Jordan said it had no problems with the resolution but had objections to specific reference to Saudi Arabia without any reference to Jordan.

During Thursday's talks in Cairo, Jordan and Egypt agreed to revitalise the Joint Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee chaired by the premiers of the two countries.

The two sides also resolved problems related to the acceptance of Jordanian students at Egyptian universities, Mr. Kahariti said.

The minister said that his government's policy was focused on the need to normalise Arab relations as "a strategic and not as a temporary, transitional option."

Following the talks in Cairo, Mr. Musa was quoted as saying that "Jordanian-Egyptian interests in the region are identical."

Jordan hails Mideast

(Continued from page 1)

permanent secretariat for its monitoring committee in Amman. This secretariat will forge macro-economic policies including trade, investment, finance, foreign exchange and others. Without such harmonisation, among the regional parties, in terms of these policies, the Bank's scope of work will be constrained. Thus the two institutions will complement each other in creating a new cooperation and development era in the Middle East.

"Participation in the bank will not be limited to the countries which will enter into it in the initial stage. The door will be kept open for other regional and international parties to participate in the future."

"Jordan is satisfied with this outcome of the meeting. We are also satisfied that this idea, which we helped in initiating, studying and defending, is expected to see the light in the forthcoming Amman Economic Conference, due to convene in the period Oct. 31-Nov. 1, 1995."

Russians in 'final assault'

(Continued from page 1)

The Russian President on Friday seeking information.

The agency said Mr. Yeltsin had told Mr. Kohl — who is one of Moscow's staunchest Western allies — what he is doing to try to end the conflict but gave no other details.

The Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg, demanded an end to the Russian military action and said it would delay examination of Moscow's application for membership of the group of 33 countries but the door would remain open for Moscow.

Contact group presses Serbs

(Continued from page 12)

The U.N. described Bosnia as relatively quiet in the past 24 hours aside from clashes in the northwestern Bihać enclave and near the eastern enclave of Srebrenica.

"Sporadic small arms fire, heavy machinegun bursts and occasional shelling continued in the Bihać pocket," spokesman Major Hervé Gourmelon told a news briefing.

Maj. Gourmelon said a 45-minute firefight between separatist Serbs and Bosnian government army units inside the Srebrenica pocket occurred after Serb forces had stealthily encroached on the U.N.-protected enclave in the previous four days.

Sporadic artillery and small arms duels ensued later in the day. U.N. observers counted 90 artillery explosions and more than 1,000 rounds of small arms fire.

process towards the peace treaty with Israel, Prince Hassan referred to the Oslo agreement and the other developments leading to the signing of the treaty. "We all believe in the language of a comprehensive solution and its content as a complement to the idea of stability instead of war in the Middle East," he said, adding that there was no mathematical concept that the Syrian and Jordanian negotiations will ripen simultaneously.

Noting that issues in the negotiations were complicated and thorny, he said it was difficult to follow up what was going on on other tracks because of the lack of coordination among the Arab parties to the peace talks.

He expressed hope that there would be a minimum level of Arab coordination which he said might develop into an aspect of joint Arab action in the future.

Prince Hassan said Jordanian-Egyptian cooperation was continuing at the regional and international levels, denying press reports that there were a kind of competition between the two countries. "In view of Jordan's size, population and economy, I do not view these reports about competition as accurate," he said.

He noted that the two countries had identical views on new political concepts such as Middle Eastern cooperation and coordination in social and economic issues.

Replying to a question on whether the channels between Jordan and Syria were open, he said the Jordanian minister of industry and trade, (then Rima Khalaf),



A HUMAN WASTELAND: Over half a million people are believed to have died in Rwanda

Death squads sow new terror in Rwanda

Defeated Hutu extremists have regrouped, Robert Block reports from Nyamasheke

THERE ARE only two things that Vianney Mazimpaka remembers about the milliseconds after a bullet tore through his neck and just before he was swallowed by unconsciousness. The first is falling off the roof of his house where he was trying to hide from his attackers. The second is the identity of one of the men who tried to kill him early on Saturday morning.

Leaning up from the cot on the fifth floor of the hospital in Nyamasheke and holding the bandage that covered the exit wound on the back of his head, Mr. Mazimpaka whispered a name.

"He was an Interahamwe," he said, referring to the dreaded militias that killed hundreds of thousands of people in Rwanda. "I am sure of it."

If Mr. Mazimpaka's memory and the reports by United Nations military observers are correct, then it appears that Rwanda's killers have started a campaign to stage a comeback just five months after their defeat by the rebels of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF).

Not even infants were

spared, two babies were injured by machete blows to the head, but survived. One child, his mother, father and a middle-aged woman were not so lucky.

Later, the neighbours and friends of those killed in the raid stood around the four mounds of dirt — three of them large enough for adults, and one perceptibly smaller, that marked the graves of the victims.

They were frightened and angry. "The bandits shot these people and then cut them with machetes. We are frightened, and we need protection," said one woman in the crowd.

Combined rifles and machete attacks are the hall mark of the Interahamwe militias, responsible for the massacres in Rwanda last April in which as many as one million people were killed. U.N. sources and local residents say that the attackers operate in teams that infiltrate Rwanda by boat from Ijwi, an island on the Zairian side of the lake.

"The bandits come from over there," said Baltazar Semenga, a teenage boy, pointing at a valley in the island, which is visible from

Nyamasheke. "They come here by boat and they steal from us and kill us."

U.N. officials said that although the raids seemed to be aimed at rustling cattle and looting, they believe the attacks represent the beginning of a low-level insurgency campaign in the form of hit and run operations. "It is clear that the attackers have good intelligence and choose their target carefully. Many of the attacks showed a great deal of precision," said one military source. "If the aim of the former government is to try to create instability in Rwanda then it is succeeding," he added.

For months now there have been reports that former members of Rwanda's extremist government army have been training in preparation for a guerrilla war and a destabilisation campaign to avenge their defeat. Government officials in south-western Rwanda acknowledged that RPF soldiers have engaged troops of the former regime who were trying to infiltrate Rwanda from Ijwi, but dismiss the significance of the raids. "They represent no threat at all," said

Theobald Rutihunga, the governor of Cyangugu province, which encompasses Nyamasheke. "That (former government) army across the border (in Zaire) is disorganised and undisciplined. Their threat to come back here is nothing more than a wish that they have no means to make come true."

In an internal report written in October the U.N. said that the former government forces were undergoing a reorganisation process and were expected to mount small-scale insurgency operations in the near future, probably within six months.

The report added: "The risk of such operations increases as time progresses. The size and effectiveness of future RGF (Rwandan Government Force) operations will depend on the level of outside assistance available to them."

But the south-west has not been the only area to suffer raids. At least 10 people died recently in attacks on a village near the south eastern town of Kibungo. The attackers reportedly infiltrated from

Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania.

The reorganisation, and the public desire by Rwanda's former leaders to re-take their country by force, led one French relief agency, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), to pull out of the Rwanda refugee camps last month. At the time MSF said it was "unacceptable that the international community allows humanitarian aid to so openly strengthen and legitimise the power of leaders of a regime which organised and perpetrated a genocide."

According to a leaked document obtained by the Independent, the U.N. force commander in Rwanda, Major-General Guy Tousignant, said that December and January would be decisive months for the former regime. The document quotes the general as saying that if the former regime failed to live up to its promises to launch a counter attack against Rwanda around Christmas, the morale of its forces would suffer possibly an irreversible blow.

The Independent

Jordanian land not leased

(Continued from page 1)

over the fact that Jerusalem is part of the lands occupied in 1967 and that Jerusalem is not only an issue of worship and religious representation, but an issue of a people also," he said. "We do not talk about Palestinianising, Jordanising, Saudising the issue of Jerusalem because the issue is not one of having the Islamic view understood because there are equal rights concerning worship in Jerusalem."

He said Jordan had been and still is supporting having Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state and Palestinian rights without any reservations or limits.

In reply to a question on whether Israel might seek to confuse the Palestinian Authority to rule and to push towards having Jordan take responsibility over the West Bank, Prince Hassan said he viewed it the other way since "the focus is now on the Jordanian identity, specially after the recent census and the call for citizens that the severance of ties exists only west of the river while east of the river we talk about one people and we hold tight to national unity."

"The biggest fear for us with regard to the occupied land is not the struggle between the national, pan-Arab or religious trends, but is the generation that for more than a quarter of a century grew up under Israeli occupation, having the villages and cities there separated by settlements and the separation between Jerusalem and the West Bank and between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This separation grew up to closer ties with Jordan... but might also lead to closer Palestinian-Israeli ties as was the case with the

Jordan that Jordanian-Gulf and Jordanian-Saudi integration was the most aspect of Arab economic stability in the coming stage. Any Jordanian weakness will mean that this barrier and this belt will be side-stepped by Israel with its economic weight and Jordan would lose its ability to carry out a central role in the benefit of Arab stability in the coming years," he said.

He said the absence of consultations among Arab countries and bawling these countries judge their interrelations through the perspectives of other parties in the world widened the gap between Arab countries and deprived them of the chance to build mutual confidence required at this difficult stage in Arab history.

In reference to the meeting of the Jerusalem Committee in Morocco, he said: "I would like to explain that Jerusalem consists of three circles, inside the walled city and those outside considered by Israel as greater Jerusalem and which Israel wants to expand to include areas from Bethlehem to Ramallah."

He said the Christian World was preparing to hold celebrations marking the year 2000 and international Jews were preparing for a celebration in 1996 to mark 3000 years since the establishment of Jerusalem. But the Islamic World was preparing nothing about the Muslim rights inside the walls of the city, he said. It is unfortunate that talk about Jerusalem be only political since any vacuum that might emerge would leave the issue of Jerusalem for the Israeli religious affairs ministry, he said.

"When we talk politically, we support the Palestinians within the second and third circles in Jerusalem and we had no dispute with the PLO

visited Damascus two weeks ago.

"The daily and procedural relations are continuing but we are not familiar with the issue of the Syrian-Arabian dialogue or the Syrian-Israeli dialogue and did not ask to be familiarised with them. There is a basis of confidence between the two countries' leaderships and we still hope to have a comprehensive framework of a political settlement," he said.

Replying to another question on Jordanian-Saudi relations, Prince Hassan said last Ramadan he thanked, on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein, King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz and Prince Salman Ben Abdul Aziz for making a donation to Jerusalem. "We think that with regards to Jerusalem, competition over good doing is legitimate and desired; we hope that the Palestinian citizen will get more support and this is not an issue of controversy."

He said that he had the chance to meet with Prince Salman and Prince Bandar Ben Sultan in New York, explaining that the desired meeting at the level of leaderships had not materialised yet.

Prince Hassan underlined the importance of integration between Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Jordan and other Arab Gulf countries.

"The conviction is still that we constitute a barrier in the face of an Israeli domination of the Arab economies in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region and the continuous threat that economic disparities create more malfunctions and generate a conviction in

Arabs of 1948."

The Crown Prince reviewed the situation of Iraq and warned against Arabs following the policy of "double containment" of Iran and Iraq. He said such a policy could lead to fuelling extremism in the region.

Prince Hassan said he respects Islamic fundamentalism in its historical sense, but warned of radicalism in its various forms. "I stress that going back to Islam for reasons related to political deprivation or deprivation of civil and social rights can be understood. When we talk about 130 million Arabs whose income will be less than the income of seven

million Israelis within 10 years, the bet is that there will be more extremism."

Noting that Jordan managed to contain the Islamic trend within the constitutional and parliamentary context as well as the framework of the National Charter, he said Jordan was always hoping for finding solutions to the problems of extremism at the Arab and Islamic levels.

He said the idea of establishing a Middle East cooperation bank did not rise out of a vacuum but was the expression of a regional concept adding that the available mechanisms do not necessarily serve the aspired goals.

Settlers launch 'war for land'

(Continued from page 1)

Adumim, the biggest on the West Bank with a population of 20,000, has plans to grow to 50,000 over the next decade and wants to take over the beduin camp.

The Jehalin have rejected a move to land near the rubbish dump for the Palestinian village of Abu Dis and spurned offers of financial aid as inadequate.

The government froze new settlement building after winning the 1992 elections but allowed the completion of 11,000 units already underway and encouraged construction on the West Bank around Jerusalem.

Haaretz revealed Friday that 700 families have recently moved into homes on the West Bank which the government had formally forbidden them to occupy.

The question of settlements is not due to be negotiated between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) until the start of the third year of autonomy — or in May 1996.

The settlement of Maale

Mexican fears unwarranted in Asia, economists say

HONG KONG (R) — Fears of a Mexican-style capital outflow were still rocking Asia Friday, despite economists' advice that the worries are unfounded.

Foreign investors were asking whether Mexico's currency devaluation and capital outflow crisis could happen in Asia.

But analysts and economists say Asian economies bear little resemblance to Mexico's economic circumstances that led to its currency devaluation, and investors have overreacted by moving capital out of the region.

"Anybody who compares Mexico with Hong Kong, Thailand and Indonesia is basically not very well informed," said Andrew Freris, economist with Salomon Brothers in Hong Kong.

Asian economies have high savings ratios, low current account deficits relative to gross domestic product, in some cases budget surpluses, high debt-to-GDP ratios and proper growth outlooks, economists say.

Mr. Freris said currencies in the region such as the Hong Kong dollar, Thai baht, Philippines peso and Indonesian rupiah are wobbling in investor nervousness over fears they will be pegged from the U.S. dollar.

The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar and other Asian economies maintain their currencies in tight bands relative to the U.S. dollar. Investors fear speculators might decouple Asian currencies from their tight ranges.

On Friday the Hong Kong Monetary Authority propped up its currency by withdrawing funds from the interbank market and causing wholesale rates to spike up.

Trading in the Philippines peso was suspended temporarily when it touched the threshold of a volatility band, and Thailand offered foreign banks one-week rates of 9.50 per cent to attract foreign capital.

"Everything that is linked to the U.S. dollar is suspect," said Mr. Freris. "People have every right to act and respond rationally. People take very substantial losses on markets when they fall so they can't take the risk."

Enzo von Pfeil, economist with S.G. Warburg, said fundamentals in Asian economies were sound, but this

would be hard to argue to foreign-based fund managers when there is so much uncertainty in the wake of the Mexico crisis.

"The level of ignorance is so high by the (U.S.) retail industry generally," said Mr. Von Pfeil. "They will tar all of Asia with the same brush they have tarred Mexico with," he said. "I think it's actually very much of an overreaction. There's nothing wrong with Asian fundamentals."

Manila brokers blamed a 5.6 per cent slump in stocks on Friday on worries about the Mexican capital outflow.

"Because of the Mexico crisis no foreign fund manager wants to go into emerging markets," said Noel Reyes of Dharmala Securities.

Friday's jitters followed Thursday's action by regional government officials to shore up their currencies and allay concern about their economies.

Indonesian officials Thursday said the government would not resort to devaluing the rupiah because the country's economic fundamentals were solid.

"Our situation is very different from that in Mexico. I do not see any impact in Indonesia. We remain with our prudent fiscal and monetary policy," Finance Minister Mar'ie Mohammad told reporters.

Indonesia has estimated the country's foreign debt will hit \$100 billion by the end of the 1995/96 fiscal year starting next April.

In Thailand, officials saw no reason for a currency fall. Bandit Nijshawon, Bank of Thailand deputy director of economic research department said: "Thailand's economy is fundamentally sound, in a strong position."

Thailand expects gross domestic product growth of 8.5 per cent and inflation of five per cent. It has a debt service ratio of 10.9 per cent.

Economists were sanguine about the longer term outlook for the region, saying Asian economies have high savings ratios and do not suffer crippling debt burdens.

"People from East Asia have penchant for saving. It's cultural — no social security to rely on," said Bangkok bank chief economist Nimit Nontapuntawat.

Southern Europe monetary crisis spurs moves to single currency

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The collapse of the Spanish peseta and the Italian lira highlights both the need for a single currency in the European Union (EU) and the problems inherent in achieving this goal, EU officials here said.

The plunge of the peseta almost to its floor level against the German mark within the European Monetary System (EMS) coupled with the weakness not just of the lira but also of the Portuguese escudo and the Swedish krona "are causing a lot of concern in the European Commission," a member said.

The currency crisis has shattered the EMS stability of which the EU has been so proud since the last crisis of August 1993, when it was decided to broaden the margins within which EMS currencies may fluctuate against each other from 2.5 to 15 per cent.

The return to stability has fuelled optimism about achieving a common European currency by the end of the century.

The lira left the EMS in September 1992 and does not currently pose a threat to the delicate exchange mechanism between EU currencies. However its fluctuations, like

those of the peseta, are having a considerable negative impact on the ordinary day-to-day business of the European Union which since January 1993 has been a single market where goods circulate freely.

"The effects of the depreciation of the lira and peseta are enormous and Italian exports in particular have increased exponentially," said Peter Praet, an economic adviser to the Generale de Banque in Brussels.

"These devaluations which significantly boost the exports of some EU countries were the main problem envisaged by European officials

when the margins of fluctuation were widened.

"It seems absurd to say so but the decline of the peseta and lira proves the importance of having a single currency because there can be no single market without a single currency," Mr. Praet said.

"These monetary tensions show that there are only two possible systems — floating exchange rates or a single currency — and not a system which is in between," he said.

The problem, say EU officials, is that neither Italy nor Spain is economically ready to move towards a common currency. They do not fulfill

Merrill Lynch revises forecasts for key currencies

The following report covering the period from Thursday Jan. 5, 1995 until Wednesday Jan. 11, 1995 is provided by Naser Nabulsi, private client group, Merrill Lynch — Dubai

Currency Outlook

Overview

Fundamental View: We have revised higher our dollar-yen forecast in light of further evidence that the dollar has probably bottomed against the yen, at least for now. However, we maintain our view that the dollar is on a longer-term trend of depreciation against the yen.

Our new forecast is for the dollar to strengthen to near JPY/USD 105 in three- and six-month's time before trending lower in 12-month's time to JPY/USD 95.

We also look for the dollar to strengthen against the mark and trade near DM/USD 1.60, 1.65 and 1.60 in three-six and 12-month's time, respectively, and have adjusted our European cross rates to reflect this. Though the dollar has been somewhat weaker against the Deutsche mark in recent days, that should change as market participants gear up for more Fed tightening.

We still expect the Fed to raise rates at the Jan. 31-Feb. 1 FOMC meeting — despite concerns that an increase will aggravate the Mexico's problems — and again at or around the March 28 meeting.

Japanese yen

Fundamental View: In the last few weeks we have seen increased evidence that the dollar may have bottomed against the yen. We have revised our short- and medium-term forecasts to reflect this, but continue to expect a longer-term trend of dollar weakness.

Our new forecast is for the dollar to strengthen to trade near JPY/USD 105 in three- and six-month's time before trending lower in 12-month's time to JPY/USD 95. There are

a number of reasons for near-term dollar strength: Widening interest rate differentials between the U.S. and Japan, indications that the Japanese are again sending capital to U.S. markets after a long hiatus, and further deceleration of U.S. capital outflows. At around 360 basis points, short-term nominal interest rate spreads between the U.S. and Japan are reaching compelling levels. With the Fed expected to increase rates at least two more times in the next few months and Japan unlikely to change rates, that spread could widen by 100 or more basis points.

Furthermore, with returns in the U.S. markets looking more and more attractive to Japanese investors, we are beginning to see a return of Japanese capital. At the same time that capital inflows appear to be picking up, capital outflows — mostly in the form of international mutual funds — appear to be slowing now that U.S. markets are beginning to offer more value and investors are discovering how risky some of those investments are. Lastly, compared to his predecessor, the new U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin seems more adept at assuring the markets that Washington favours a strong dollar.

In the longer run, though, the huge capital imbalance between the U.S. and Japan's current accounts will continue to weigh on the dollar, exposing it to volatility whenever capital inflows or outflows change significantly. In particular, Japanese investors suffered huge losses in U.S. markets in the past and are likely to be cautious in their return. For the dollar, this will continue to be an important wild card.

Deutsche mark

Fundamental View: A "flight to quality" appears to be boosting the Deutschmark as political concerns (Spain and Italy), fiscal concerns (Sweden) and the Mexican crisis have led to a significant rise in the value of the mark against the dollar and an even larger appreciation against European crosses. Thin holiday trading in the week between Christmas and New Year and the plunge in the value of the Mexican peso began a process of mark appreciation that has yet to level off. On Dec. 26, the mark was trading at DM/USD 1.58

compared to DM/USD 1.54 today. Some have suggested that recent mark appreciation is due to expectations that the Bundesbank will raise rates sooner than expected.

We do not believe this is the case and point to falling Euro/DM futures — where expectations for short-term rates have been revised down in recent weeks — as evidence that the market does not believe this either. We expect the Bundesbank to wait until the second half of this year before lifting the Lombard or the discount rate, though the repo rate is likely to drift higher in the first half. The dollar should make up some ground if, as we expect, the Fed increases rates again at the Jan. 31-Feb. 1 FOMC meeting. Our three-, six- and 12-month forecast is DM/USD 1.60, 1.65, 1.60, respectively.

Pound sterling

Fundamental View: The British pound was steady against the dollar in the last week as pound weakness against the mark was matched by dollar weakness against the mark. Currently, the pound is trading at USD/GBP 1.563 and DM/GBP 2.40 compared to USD/GBP 1.561 and DM/GBP 2.43 in the prior week. Like some of the other European crosses, political concerns may be influencing the value of the mark. Today's debate in the House of Commons on membership of key committees could lead to a government defeat, weakening Prime Minister John Major's ability to carry out his legislative agenda.

We think John Major will squeak by, but expect the government to remain under pressure throughout 1995 — a source of volatility for the pound. With more interest rate increases on the horizon — probably March — we expect the pound to rebound against the mark and trade near our three-month forecast of DM/GBP 2.45 and to appreciate further to our 12-month forecast of DM/GBP 2.50. In line with our forecast for stronger dollar appreciation against the mark, we expect the pound to slip to USD/GBP 1.53 in the next three months before recovering to USD/GBP 1.56 in 12-month's time.

China becomes world's leading energy buyer

BEIJING (AFP) — China, grappling to meet energy demands that have surged along with its economic growth, is on the verge of signing a multi-billion-dollar contract for a second nuclear plant at Daya Bay, on Hong Kong's doorstep.

The drive to reduce China's estimated 20 per cent shortfall in electricity output has made it the world's leading purchaser of power plants, both large and small, nuclear, thermal or hydro, Western experts said.

China sits on the world's biggest-known coal reserves and ranks 10th in terms of oil reserves, but it has been unable to keep pace with the growing demand fuelled by double-digit growth.

Official figures show that annual consumption has risen by eight per cent since 1980 and will pass the 980 billion kilowatt-hour mark this year and reach 1,500 billion kWh by the turn of the century.

French Industry and External Trade Minister Jose Rossi arrived in Beijing Friday, confident that he can clinch a contract worth up to \$2.45 billion for Daya Bay II on behalf of a French-led consortium.

The project involves French nuclear steam-generator builder Framatome, the Franco-British turbine makers GEC-Alsthom, Alcatel-Alsthom and Electricite de France (EDF), whose president Gilles Menage has been in Beijing since last Sunday.

The backdrop to the talks is a warning from the power ministry to factories that they face "inevitable" power cuts in the coming months, particularly in industrial regions, coastal areas and in the south, where some growth rates have shot up by 20 per cent.

Increased coal production, which reached 1.16 billion tonnes last year, cannot make up the shortfall as coal-fired energy accounts for only a little over 60 per cent of the total production.

Diesel produces less than 20 per cent, as does hydroelectric, while nuclear brings in a mere 1.5 per cent of the total, although officials hope to boost hydro-electric production to 25 per cent and nuclear to two per cent by 2000.

Prime Minister Li Peng has given the go-ahead for a massive project to build a hydro-electric plant in the Three Gorges along the Yangtze River in central China, despite environmental protests over the destruction of an area renowned for its beauty.

The completion of the project, scheduled for 2009, will bring 18,000 megawatts on line, with annual production of 84 billion kWh.

The levelling-off in the oil industry despite the discovery of new fields turned China into a net importer last year, the head of the China National Petroleum Corporation admitted in December.

Production last year was 146 million tonnes, compared with 144 million tonnes in 1993.

To cope with the shortage both in industry and also in residential needs, the government has announced plans to increase production at an annual rate of 15,000 MW up to 2000.

But to do so China will need financial help from international organisations like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: The daytime continues to be a time when you can perceive ways to leap forward to new and interesting concepts. Mid-day especially is the best time to make practical application of these ideas but the rest of your day works well too.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Showing more affection for allies brings good results during the daytime, but steer clear of arguments in the evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You can get your environment improved considerably now and be more comfortable in the future. Be kind with fellow associates.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a good day to get into recreational best enjoyed by your associates, but tonight stay at home with loved ones and save money.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Show your loved ones that you are willing to cooperate with them more and you get good results. Be calm, cool and poised.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This is a fine day for telling your associates how much you like them. Be sure not to criticize. Thus you can improve relationships.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Find some way of adding to present income and also get your property affairs in better order. Try to cut down on expenses.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you tackle some definite personal aims in a positive way and are ingenious, you can gain them in a very successful manner.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) This is a good day for asserting one's position in relationships with others, then use this knowledge wisely and very productively.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get busy at personal aims which are difficult to handle during work days, and use positive methods. Drive with care on the highway.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is a fine day to get into affairs handled for which you have had little time of late. If you state your aims, you will gain support.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Very interesting ideas can be yours now if you are alert. One who thinks differently from you can be of real assistance now.

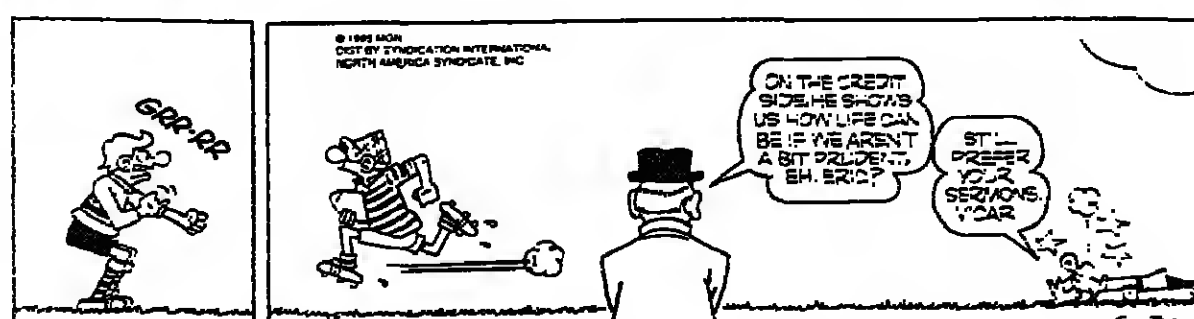
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Plan what should be done to bring more happiness to your mate and then carry through with ideas. Show that you are dependable.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

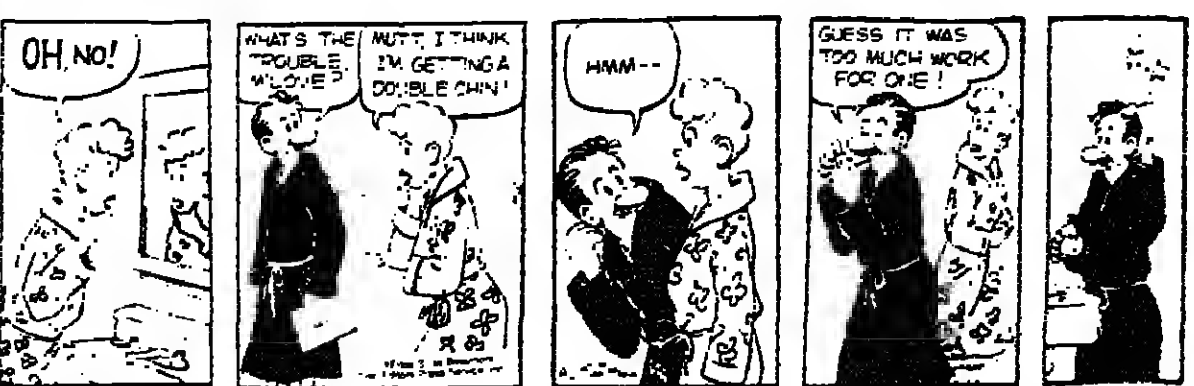
Peanuts



Andy Capp



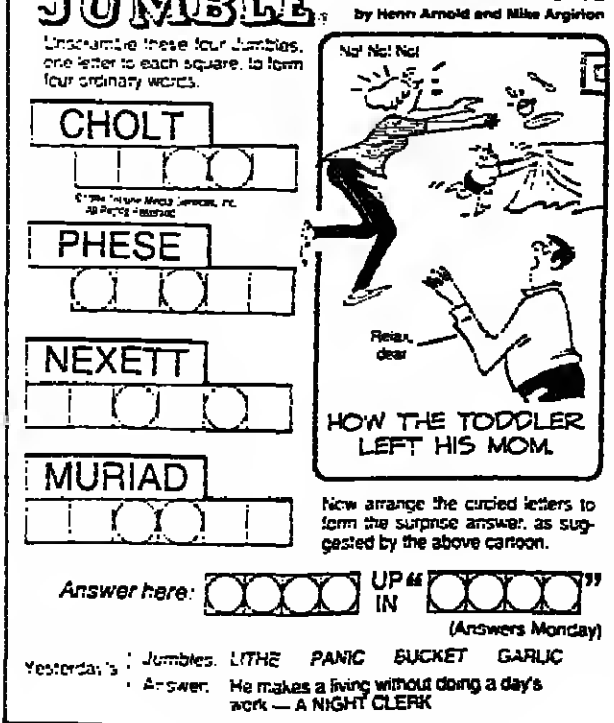
Mutt'n'Jeff



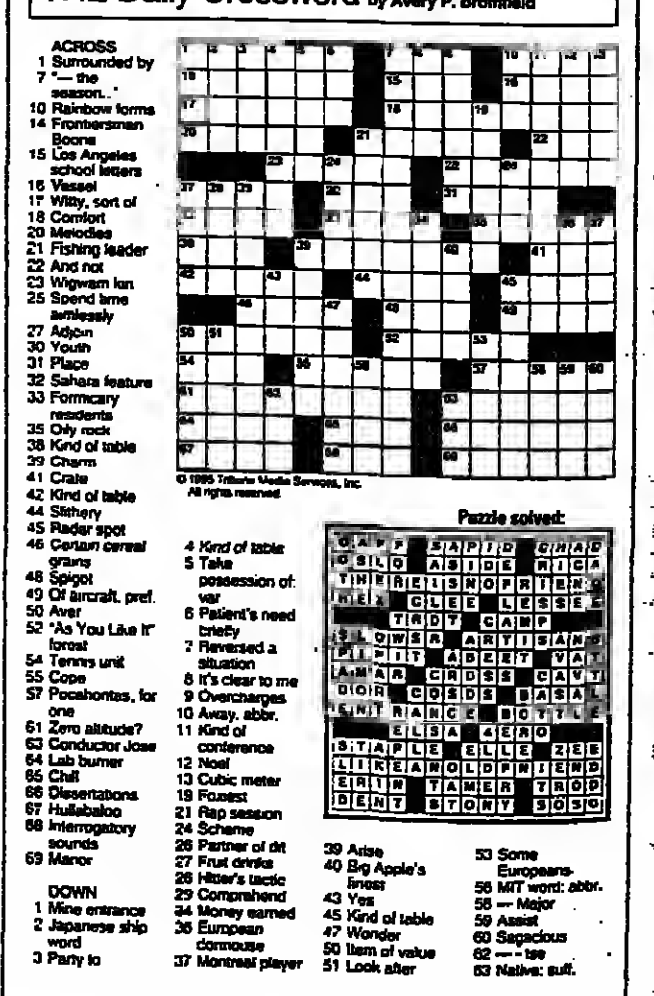
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword



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Business & Finance

Business daily beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Romanian beef found unfit for consumption

★ The Ministry of Agriculture recommended a total stoppage of beef imports from Romania after it has been confirmed that cows and calves were carrying tuberculosis. A ministry official emphasized that there were gaps in the trading process and in providing health certificates in Romania. Previous shipments, amounting to 3,822 heads, have been quarantined and strict measures were taken to ensure that they are not slaughtered unless cleared by the special department at the ministry and veterinary doctors at the slaughter house. Romanian lambs are not affected and it is still permitted to import them (Al Ra'i).

★ Pharmaceutical specialists stress that Jordanian companies are able to compete with Israeli drug firms and are ready to export pharmaceutical products to Israel and the Palestinian territories. Jordanian drug companies compete well in terms of quality and price against U.S. and European firms, having exported drugs worth \$100 million to many Arab and East European countries in 1993 (Al Ra'i).

★ Natural Resources Authority (NRA) Director-General Fakhreddin Al Daghestani said Friday that press reports about reaching an agreement in the field of energy between Jordan and Israel were not accurate as the two parties were still discussing ways and means to exchange information and expertise in the future with a view for joint cooperation. A report in the Jerusalem Post said Thursday that Africa-Israel Investment has signed an agreement to establish an Israeli-Jordanian company for the energy, aviation, tourism, real estate and agriculture fields (Al Ra'i).

★ An Italian commercial and industrial delegation will visit the Kingdom on Jan. 23, 1995. The delegation, which groups 35 top businessmen and industrialists, will hold talks with key officials in various economic areas. After Jordan, the delegation will travel to the Palestinian self-rule territories (Al Dustour).

★ According to accurate figures and statistics, the level of poverty in 1994 reached 15 per cent, of which five per cent was absolute poverty. A family with a JD 120 monthly income is considered below poverty line while the family which does not have to pay rent is considered below the poverty line at JD 96 monthly income (Al Dustour).

★ Statistics show that the highest demand by travellers on Royal Jordanian planes and at the duty free market at Queen Alia Airport was for cigarettes, cigars, cosmetics, perfumes and souvenirs (Al Aswaq).

★ Jordanian investors are currently in the process of setting up the "International Company for Medical Investments" with a JD 8 million capital to be used for building a centre for treatment of CNS tumours by Gamma knife. According to Isam Hawamdeh, head of the founding committee, the centre will be the first in the Middle East and the 66th in the world to have the Gamma knife equipment at a cost of \$4.5 million (Al Aswaq).

★ Preparations are under way at the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that enough meat and vegetables as well as canned foodstuffs are available at reasonable prices in the market during the holy month of Ramadan (Al Aswaq).

Share prices decline slightly despite higher turnover at AFM

Share prices decline slightly despite higher turnover at AFM

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN — Turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) shot up last week, but prices registered a slight decline as investors switched holdings based on already announced year-end figures of some companies and expected announcements from others, brokers said Friday. They said optimism sparked by the change in government that there would be increased coordination among the various financial authorities of the country was riding high in the market. They expected turnover to continue to increase with prices remaining largely stable after taking into account dividend announcements.

Asia and Middle East replace eastern Europe for Vietnam workers

HANOI (AFP) — Asia and the Middle East are replacing eastern Europe as the main destinations for Vietnamese workers, a report from the labour ministry said Wednesday. Most Vietnamese workers departing for foreign work places in 1994 went to Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Lebanon and Libya, primarily to work in the textile, electronics and construction industries, according to the report carried by local newspapers.

In Kuwait, Qatar and Yemen, rapidly developing public health sectors are attracting Vietnamese doctors and nurses, the report said.

to enter the market in earnest in the new year, contributing to a new momentum on the trading floor. The weekly report of the AFM said trading volume during last week was JD 8.9 million, up 97.8 per cent from the previous week's JD 4.5 million. The general share price index based on 60 major companies closed at 144.7 points, down three points, or 0.2 per cent, from the week's opening of 145 points, but still higher than the 143.6 points seen at the beginning of the year. The report said 3.5 million shares changed hands during the week under 4,702 contracts. The industrial sector accounted for JD 3.7 million, or 41.6 per cent, of the turnover, followed by commercial banks and financial institutions with JD 3.1 million, or 34.8 per cent, the services sector with JD 2 million, or 22.5 per cent, and

insurance stock with JD 100,000, or 1.1 per cent. The sectoral indices closed with varying changes: The services sector 2.2 points, or 1.6 per cent lower, the insurance sector one point, or 0.7 per cent lower, and the industrial sector 0.7 points, or 0.5 per cent lower, while the commercial banks and financial institutions index closed 0.4 points, or 0.3 per cent higher. Shares of 87 companies were traded during the week; when trading closed on Wednesday, 26 of them showed gains, 54 showed declines and seven showed no change. Brokers said investors had picked up new optimism in the new year that the relative stagnation of the market during the year on the trading floor was destined to change as the new government moves to implement basic reforms in the various economic sectors. Another element behind the optimism was also that the government would soon be launching infrastructure projects that were announced in 1994. Brokers noted that the trend in the Jordanian market was to look to the government for signs of economic activity rather than the private sector, although this trend is slowly changing. "It will take some time before investors shift their traditional approach based on signals from the government and focus more on the actual performance of the private sector as the determining factor in the market," said a broker, who cannot be identified by name under standing market regulations. At the moment, "many are highly hopeful that the launching of government infrastructure projects would lead to increased economic activity in the private sector, and this sentiment accounts for a large part of the optimism in the market," added the broker.

The immediate market indication was a continued rise in turnover but prices might come down as investors adjust holdings in line with expected dividend announcements, according to most AFM brokers. However, some investors were also apprehensive that the new finance minister, Basel Jaradneh, long known to be tough in implementing restrictive measures whenever needed, might move to squeeze commercial credit in the market as a means to keep inflation under control. If that happens, the brokers said, it is highly likely that AFM share prices might suffer.

U.S. \$1.00 costs 1.4184/94
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1.7140/50
1.2822/32
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1620.81/8
98.33/43
7.4725/25
6.6950/00
6.0283/33
\$1.5716/26
\$379.95380/35

One sterling
One ounce of gold \$379.95380/35

UNCTAD official arrives ahead of seminar on GSP

By a Jordan Times staff reporter

AMMAN — A senior official of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) arrived in Jordan Friday on a several-day visit ahead of a workshop on the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in trade and how Jordanian exporters could take better advantage of the preferential treatment that developed countries offer to imports from developing countries. Stefano Inama, the UNCTAD official, will hold talks with government officials as well as Amman Chamber of Industry officials headed by the chamber's president, Khaludun Abu Hassan, in preparations for the Jan. 22-24 workshop, said Ali Dajani, an adviser at the chamber.

The main purpose of the workshop, expected to be addressed by American, Japanese, Canadian and other international experts on GSP as well as officials from UNCTAD, is to streamline the Kingdom's trade under the GSP system. Also addressing the gathering will be a senior representative of the delegation of the European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, and another representing the United States. Mr. Dajani said the government had already moved to ensure a well-coordinated approach to the issue by designating the Amman Chamber of Industry as the sole authority empowered to issue the necessary certificates that should accompany Jordanian goods exported under the GSP system. "Until now there were several bodies which could issue the certificates and this had led to problems of non-coordination, with little accurate data available on Jordanian trade under the GSP system," said Mr. Dajani.

Market sources said such a state of affairs had led to misuse of the preferential treatment available to Jordan. They cited as an example certifications covering up to four million shirts while the actual production capacity in the country was around 250,000. The rest of the shirts came from outside sources and were certified as Jordanian after slight changes, perhaps in labelling, and exported under the GSP system. This led to some of the

importing countries to tighten their conditions on imports from Jordan, and the Kingdom was deprived of opportunities to export its own products since the importers also imposed certain quotas, the sources said.

Mr. Dajani would not comment directly on who was responsible for such practices, but he expressed hope that this month's Amman seminar would clear the air and streamline the entire structure of Jordan's application of the GSP privileges.

According to UNCTAD, the seminar "is expected to enhance trade potentialities and to help diversify the base of the Mediterranean countries in the new trade environment created by the conclusion of the Uruguay Round (of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade — GATT) and the launching of new initiatives, such as the new European Union Mediterranean policy and the outcome of the Middle East/North Africa summit" held in Casablanca, Morocco, late last year.

The Amman seminar is expected to elaborate on the GSP schemes available to Jordanian exporters and the agreements reached between the Kingdom and the European Union on cooperation in trade.

A Jordanian-Italian roundtable of businessmen and officials is also scheduled to be held on Jan. 24, the last day of the seminar on GSP. It will be attended by about 35 Italian businessmen led by Giorgio Marini, president of the Rome-based Arab-Italian Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Abu Hassan will chair the Jordanian delegation to the roundtable, which will "provide an opportunity... to discuss bilateral market access issues and possibilities of joint ventures," an UNCTAD statement said.

The seminar is part of a series being organised in the Mediterranean region financed by the government of Italy, a member of the European Union.

Italy has assumed a high-profile approach to Jordan in terms of economic cooperation and trade relations in the wake of the launching of the Arab-Israeli peace process in 1991 and arranged a series of visits by Italian businessmen and experts to Jordan seeking to enhance ties and advise Jordanian businessmen on how to improve their production and marketing strategies.

JORDANIAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
COMMODITY MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD 10/01/1995 - 11/01/1995				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMMODITY NAME	TRADE VOLUME	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE	PRICE CHANGE
CEREALS				
WHEAT	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
BARLEY	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
MAIZE	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
OILSEEDS				
SUNFLOWER	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
SOYBEAN	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
VEGETABLES				
POTATO	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
CARROT	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
FRUITS				
APPLE	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
ORANGE	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
MEAT				
BEEF	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
LAMB	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
Dairy				
MILK	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00
CHEESE	100,000	100.00	100.00	0.00

Financial Markets

In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

Forex Interest Rates				
Currency	1 MONTH	3 MONTH	6 MONTH	12 MONTH
U.S. Dollar	5.50	6.00	6.50	7.00
Sterling Pound	5.75	6.18	6.68	7.25
Deutsche Mark	6.68	6.81	6.96	7.56
Swiss Franc	6.43	6.75	6.90	7.37
French Franc	5.37	5.75	6.25	6.75
Japanese Yen	5.12	5.25	5.51	5.50
European Currency Unit	5.81	6.06	6.40	7.00

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency		
U.S. Dollar	0.6990	0.7010
Sterling Pound	1.0816	1.0930
Deutsche Mark	0.6546	0.6569
Swiss Franc	0.5417	0.5444
French Franc	0.1317	0.1324
Japanese Yen	0.0093	0.0098
Dutch Guilder	0.4055	0.4075
Swedish Krona	0.0431	0.0433
Hellen Lira	0.0431	0.0433
Belgian Franc	0.0431	0.0433

Other Currencies

Currency		
Bahraini Dinar	1.8390	1.8510
Lebanese Lira	0.041775	0.042885
Saudi Riyal	0.1858	0.1878
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3100	2.3600
Qatari Riyal	6.1900	6.1922
Egyptian Pound	0.0000	0.0140
Omani Riyal	1.8000	1.8160
UAE Dirham	0.1880	0.1908
Greek Drachma	0.0000	0.3150
Cypriot Pound	1.0075	1.0125

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

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